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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Fact and Fiction: Narrative Mediation in Tom Jones

BY

Craig Peterson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDNONTON, ALBERTA

Fall 1992

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Fact and Fiction: Narrative Mediation in Tom Jones submitted by Craig Peterson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Greg Hollingshead

Dr. Bruce Stovel

Dr. Anna Altmann

August 31, 1992

For HJP

who told me I could

Abstract

This paper explores how the narrator of Henry Fielding's Tom Jones mediates the discourses of History and Fiction. The narrator adopts two roles--one of an historian and one of an artist. While posing as an historian, the narrator creates the illusion that he has gathered the facts with which he has constructed his History. Despite his role as an historian, the narrator often draws attention to his role as an artist, not only in the artistic plotting and representation of facts, but also in the invention of historical facts.

Despite the contradictory nature of these two roles, the narrator never asserts one so as to expose the other as completely spurious. The contention between these two roles, however, results in a narrative that both relies on and subverts the claims of history to tell its particular truth. What ultimately emerges is a verisimilar fiction that somewhat ironically wears the authoritative robes of the discourse of history. By problematizing the discourse of history while privileging that of verisimilar fiction, Fielding is able to posit his belief in a divine order within a fictional world that purports to represent the gritty reality of everyday life.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Chapter 1: The Fiction of Facts.....8

Chapter 2: The Mediating Narrator.....31

Chapter 3: Beyond the Facts.....62

Conclusion.....92

Bibliography.....96

Introduction

In his Origins of the English Novel, Michael McKeon elaborates a dialectic theory of the novel genre which provides an illuminating perspective from which to explore the historical and the fictional modes of discourse that inform Henry Fielding's Tom Jones.[1] Claims made in Tom Jones to record historical reality conflict with assertions of the poet's right to invent history. Although the narrator distinguishes his narrative from the Romance, his use of the word "History" is ambiguous. The narrator may often define his work as "History," but does he mean a history of events taken from the actual world or a fiction that adheres to some sort of "universal" truth?

Michael McKeon notes that the period leading up to the emergence of the novel was marked by generic instability. Instability in generic categories, he argues, registers an epistemological crisis ("a major cultural transition toward how to tell the truth in narrative" (20)). Concentrating on, but not restricting himself to, literature from the years 1600-1740, McKeon maps out this instability in a

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[1] Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740 (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1987).

Henry Fielding, Tom Jones: An Authoritative Text, Contemporary Reactions, Criticism, ed. Sheridan Baker (New York: Norton, 1973).

three-part dialectic:

> At the beginning of the period of our concern, the reigning narrative epistemology involves a dependence on received authorities and a priori traditions; I will call this posture "romance idealism." In the seventeenth century it is challenged and refuted by an empirical epistemology that derives from many sources, and this I will call "naive empiricism." But this negation of romance, having embarked on a journey for which it has no maps, at certain points loses its way. And it becomes vulnerable, in turn, to a countercritique that had been generated by its own over-enthusiasm. I will call this countercritique "extreme scepticism." In refuting its empiricist progenitor, I will argue, extreme scepticism inevitably recapitulates some features of the romance idealism which it is equally committed to opposing. (21)

In McKeon's theory, this generic instability along with an unstable social order (explained by a similar dialectic) culminated in the emergence of what can be retrospectively identified as the modern novel form--a distinct literary form "sufficient for the joint inquiry into analogous epistemological and social problems" (McKeon 410).

McKeon applies his theory to Fielding's first three works: Jonathan Wild, Shamela, and Joseph Andrews. McKeon reads the first of these works as primarily "a critique of the idealizing, 'romancing' method of traditional

biographies" (383). The second work he reads as specifically parodic, criticizing not just the nature of truth in its target, Pamela, but also the awkward, unrealistic manner in which it was conveyed. In his reading of Joseph Andrews he focuses briefly on how the narrator defines his own text, notably with the categories "true History" and "comic Romance." Romance corrects history, McKeon notes, in a "parodic and self-subversive deployment of the claim to historicity" (405). This corrective action together with the text's rejection of works of Romance illustrates Fielding's "extreme scepticism." The attraction of McKeon's dialectic is that it explains the discrepancies between novels that previous theories of the novel, such as Ian Watt's, have been unable to. It also explains the persistence of older generic elements in the newer works.

The presence of the dialectic can be perceived throughout the works of Fielding. In Tom Jones the narrator often asserts the truthfulness of his narrative. In IV,i for example, he stakes his claim to tell truth by distinguishing his own narrative from Romance and modern History:

> As Truth distinguishes our Writings from those idle Romances which are filled with Monsters, the Productions, not of Nature, but of distempered Brains; and which have been therefore recommended by an eminent Critic to the sole Use of the Pastry-cook: So, on the other hand, we would avoid any Resemblance to that kind of History which a celebrated Poet seems to think is no less

> calculated for the Emolument of the Brewer, as the reading it should be always attended with a Tankard of good Ale. (113-14)

It becomes clear a little later that the "kind of History" from which the narrator takes pains to dissociate his own narrative is that of the "News Paper[s]" (114). This passage maps out the tripartite structure of narrative that recalls the elements in McKeon's dialectic theory. The simple act of mentioning "Romances" and "News Paper[s]" situates these discourses in a temporally prior position to the narrator's discourse. The claims of Romance to authenticity derive from received authority. The category of newspapers, which represents an antidote to the Romance, stakes a claim to historicity based on an (implicitly naive) empirical epistemology. The fact that both categories are contained by "The History of a Foundling" illustrates Fielding's position of extreme scepticism, which is critical of the claims of both narrative forms for telling Truth.

Although the narrator's strategy of containing other genres accords well with McKeon's dialectic theory, Fielding's primary concern, at least in Tom Jones, seems to go beyond the mere parody and subversion of other generic categories. Shamela of course primarily parodies Richardson's Pamela. McKeon points out that Shamela, as a character, re-articulates the progressive upstart character embodied by the protagonist of Jonathan Wild (McKeon 395). Fielding attributes Machiavellian motives to the upwardly mobile young maid in his parody of Pamela, and in so doing attempts to depict a more natural (and truthful) account of

human nature than that offered by Richardson. Joseph Andrews, to a lesser extent, also parodies Richardson's work, though this book's ability to stand independent of Pamela furthers Fielding's effort to establish a new category of writing that (he believes) more truthfully represents human nature. McKeon focuses mainly on Fielding's depictions of and attitudes toward social mobility and virtue, though he does point out how the claim of Shamela to supply the historically authentic letters effectively trumps the claims to historicity made in Pamela. Rather than merely parodying such claims to historicity, Fielding uses them in Tom Jones so as to secure the authority implicit in making a claim to represent actual, historical truth. At the same time, however, these same claims are periodically and ultimately undermined by the narrator's references to his own contrivances and artistry.

According to McKeon (402), Fielding uses the term "History" to denote the process of empirical investigation into the actual phenomena of the world. Other critics, such as Ira Konigsberg, argue that the term "History" was meant by Fielding to denote "a particular kind of fiction."[2] Within Tom Jones, Fielding uses both of these meanings. The ambiguity with which the term is used in Tom Jones signifies perhaps another generic instability of the early modern period.

The manner in which History is used in Tom Jones is the

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[2] Ira Konigsberg, Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen (n.p.:Archon Books, 1985), p. 208 n8.

principal subject of my thesis. In my first chapter, I discuss how, in Tom Jones, the Romance genre is disparaged on the grounds that it does not tell "Truth." Although the use of History makes the narrator appear as though he is relating actual events, the doctrine of verisimilitude is ultimately privileged over the historical discourse. By "verisimilitude," I mean the poet's right to deviate from actual history while maintaining the text's appearance of representing reality. Whereas the 'historical' discourse in Tom Jones pretends to represent actual phenomena, the verisimilar discourse in Tom Jones conforms to the book of "Human Nature" (I,i)--a restriction that the narrator elaborates with a set of rules laid out in VIII,i. In the second chapter, I discuss the narrator in relation to these conflicting discourses: how he tries to mediate them and how they affect his characterization. The narrator alternates between the role of an historian and the role of a fictional writer. A certain playfulness evinces itself in the way Fielding juxtaposes his narrator's contradictory roles. On the one hand, the narrator is often characterized as a gatherer of historical data; on the other hand, this same narrator is often characterized as a creative writer engaged in the creation of (the) history. The narrator is careful, in his mediation of these two modes of discourse, never to allow the assertion of one to negate the validity of the other. Nevertheless, since the text's historicist elements are themselves playfully incorporated into the fictional discourse, the fictional discourse in Tom Jones ultimately prevails. In my third and final chapter, I explore how, in

the light of the text's prevailing discourse and the rules of writing laid out by the narrator, the generic and social instabilities noted by McKeon influence the construction of Fielding's fictional world. I discuss how Fielding's belief in an ultimate, divine order, in a world whose inhabitants are focused on their own everyday reality, seeks articulation through the discourse of verisimilar fiction.

The Fiction of Facts

The tradition of History, because of its claim to represent factual reality, provides a useful topos for a writer of fiction. An appeal to an extra-textual 'historic' truth can help a writer overcome a reader's incredulity or an era's scepticism. The use of history by fictional writers was especially important during the eighteenth century when scientific observation and facts became increasingly accepted as a way to determine and propagate truth. As a result, writers of the time incorporated into their fiction historicizing elements to allay any suspicion that, in the age of Truth, they were writing mere Romance. In McKeon's terms, the earlier age's "Romance ideology" was succumbing, in the eighteenth century, to the stance of "naive empiricism" with its posture of reliance on empirical evidence. Within the text of Tom Jones, the conflicting traditions of History and Romance are mediated in such a way as to displace these established discourses. The discourse of Romance is rejected outright, while the discourse of History is incorporated into what ultimately emerges as a verisimilar text thinly veiled by the authoritative robes of the historicist discourse.

History, before Fielding, had been conventionally disparaged on the grounds that although it claims to relate factual truth it relies on imaginary constructions to fill

gaps in data and rebuild available facts into the narrative that calls itself History (Scaliger 156; Sidney 192). In differentiating History from Poetry, most Renaissance critics follow Aristotle: "The true difference is that [history] relates what has happened, [poetry] what may happen . . . [and] poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (Aristotle 37). Sidney additionally remarks the unclear distinction between the two: "even Historiographers (although theyr lippes sounde of things doone, and veritie be written in theyr fore-heads,) have been glad to borrow both fashion, and weight of Poets" (Sidney, 192). Sir Francis Bacon championed history at the expense of poetry in the seventeenth century when epistemology began its shift towards an empirical bias. The stature of perceived truth rose at the expense of that of received truth. As a consequence, the universal truth which "poetry tends to express" became less secure as the emphasis placed upon the fact-based discourse in Tom Jones will attest. In order to maintain or assert its authority, poets had to make concessions to the "particular" truth of history.

The fictional world of Tom Jones can be seen as a conjunction of historical facts and fictional elements. The narrative, whose existence the narrator often takes pains to foreground as an imaginative construct, is set amongst a number of historical facts which refer to the England of 1745. These historical facts infuse the fictional elements with an illusion of historical veracity and bring to the text the authority of the emerging empiricist discourse,

while the text's fictional elements bring the authority of verisimilitude, preserving the poet's right to deviate from historical truth. The historical elements invest Tom Jones with the authority to tell factual truth, the fictional elements to tell universal truth. Yet Fielding does not use these elements simply to acquire authority to tell truth, because at all stages he criticizes both the use of these elements in other texts and the easy acceptance of these elements when naively used.

Although the text derives some authority from the historical topos, the events of the narrative undermine an historical or strictly empirical basis as a way of apprehending truth. Special attention is focused on the corruptive effect of human mediation on empirical facts. The incident of Mrs. Partridge's attack on her husband, in which she misrepresents his blood as evidence of her victimization, illustrates that factual evidence not only can be misconstrued, it can be manipulated so as to delude those who stand in judgement--in this case the Public. A more important consideration is how the Public's misjudgment (that Partridge had beaten his wife) becomes fact, and how that 'fact' becomes further corrupted as it spreads to and beyond the bounds of the Parish:

> And, indeed, a very few Days had past, before the Country to use a common Phrase, rung of the Schoolmaster of Little Baddington; who was said to have beaten his Wife in the most cruel Manner. Nay, in some Places, it was reported he had murdered her; in others, that he had broke her

> Arms; in others, her Legs; in short, there was scarce an Injury which can be done to a human Creature, but what Mrs. Partridge was somewhere or other affirmed to have received from her Husband.
>
> The Cause of this Quarrel was likewise variously reported; for, as some People said that Mrs. Partridge had caught her Husband in Bed with his Maid, so many other Reasons, of a very different Kind, went abroad. Nay, some transferred the Guilt to the Wife, and the Jealousy to the Husband. (II,v,69)

The Public's eager acceptance of these lurid falsehoods is an indictment of the naive acceptance of purported history. Gossip enjoys the same authoritative empirical basis as written history. The Reader is apprised of the true fact of Mrs. Partridge's fraudulent victimization and can observe how the factual truth becomes degraded as it spreads throughout the Parish. The text's portrayal of the corruption of truth--from Mrs. Partridge's misrepresentation of evidence through the imaginative embellishments of the gossipers--reveals the shortfalls in coming to a proper judgement based only on appearances and testimonials. This portrayal also enacts what McKeon calls extreme scepticism, which is in part a reaction against Romance elements within the discourse of empiricism.

The perseverance of Romance in an empirical discourse is expressed more in terms of a literary phenomenon when the Centinel guarding Northerton delivers his eyewitness testimony:

> He then imprecated the most heavy Curses on himself, if he had not seen the Volunteer, all over Blood, vomiting Fire out of his Mouth and Nostrils, pass by him into the Chamber where Ensign Northerton was, and then seizing the Ensign by the Throat, fly away with him in a Clap of Thunder. (VII,xiv,297)

The narrator earlier supplies an actual description of Tom against which the Centinel's can be measured: "He had on . . . a light-coloured Coat, covered with Streams of Blood" (295-6). The Centinel relates true facts in his assertion that Tom was "all over Blood." The "Fire" has no basis in fact, though Tom did pass "into the Chamber." The rest of the account is related entirely in the mode of Romance. The narrator's earlier description of Tom uses first empirical detail and then literary convention. Empirical details, which include the dress of Tom and the colour contrast of blood and pallor, yield to literary conventions when the narrator uses a metaphor ("like a Turban") to describe Tom's bandages. The narrator's description ends with a literary allusion that compares Tom's appearance to that of Shakespeare's Banquo. Both descriptions move away from a use of empirical detail to a use of literary devices. But whereas the Centinel's metaphors (if "vomiting fire" and "fly away" are descriptive terms meant to convey the Centinel's perceptions of something he did see) express only his imagination, the narrator's metaphors express the terrifying aspect of Tom's actual appearance. The narrator's representation of Tom justifies the terror of the

Centinel, whom the narrator portrays with a gentle, ironizing humour. The narrator need not further disparage the ridiculous ease with which fact turns into fiction, and then into greater fiction with the Centinel's second attempt at justifying his cowardly action: "[he] again related the Dreadful Story. . ." (297-8). The Centinel's second telling of the tale takes on further trappings of the Romance genre, distancing itself further from the factual truth.

The narrator's posture of relating an historical actuality gains credence in the way the Centinel's terror on seeing Tom is represented. The Narrator compares an actor's imitation of terror with that felt by the Centinel. This comparison privileges the Centinel's terror as the original of nature that an actor ought to copy:

> I wish, with all my Heart, some of those Actors, who are hereafter to represent a Man frighted out of his Wits, had seen him, that they might be taught to copy Nature, instead of performing several antic Tricks and Gestures, for the Entertainment and Applause of the Galleries. (296)

Whether for their lack of skill or for their attitude, the narrator disparages the actors for not representing nature. The narrator wishes the actors would copy nature. His wish that the actors "had seen" the Centinel in the "Agonies of Horror" (296) asserts the historical status of the Centinel's horror: it is a fact; it happened in Nature. When the narrator says "bloody Banquo was not worthy to be compared" (296) to the appearance of Jones, the historical

actuality of the narrated events is privileged over representational art. The narrator's desire for these actors to "copy Nature" (296) suppresses the idea that his narrative is itself an artistic copy.

The narrator does not deny his own narrative is a copy, of course, but he justifies the criticisms of other mimetic works by his professed fidelity to the Book of Nature. So at the same time that the text dramatizes how fact becomes Romance, the narrator asserts the historical or empirical veracity of the text by comparing the actuality of the Centinel's terror with the theatricality of the Actors. Through this strategy the text privileges itself as the one text that best reflects Nature. Elsewhere in the text the narrator's professions of fidelity to the Book of Nature imply a promise not to present, as had the Centinel, unnatural seeming "history." Such a promise does not restrict the narrator to relating only the historically actual; it also allows the writing of fiction so long as it adheres to the Book of Nature. In the above passage, the narrator berates the actors for not imitating the type of terror seen in Nature. The narrator's comments create the illusion of historical actuality for the terror felt by the Centinel. At the same time, the text of Tom Jones tacitly commends itself on its own representation of the Centinel's terror, privileging its own art (as Natural) and superior to that of the actors. In this passage, then, the doctrine of verisimilitude is reinforced by the text's assertion of its historicity.

The deployment of historical facts within the text

evokes the historical period in which the events of the narrative take place. The historical facts of the rebellion appear in especially the road part of the narrative, making the strictly fictional elements seem factual, and investing them with the illusion of historical reality. The text attempts more than simply to create an illusion of historical representation, however, because the historical elements in the novel are often appropriated by the text as fictional elements.

References to historical figures who were living at the time Fielding wrote his novel exemplify the text's strategy of blending history and fiction. Jenny Cameron, for whom a landlord mistakes Sophia, was an actual, though peripheral, participant in the rebellion of 1745 (XI,ii,441). The landlord misinterprets the fact of Sophia's humbleness and beauty as a sign of Nobility. The landlord is then swayed by the facts brought by the "Jacobite Squire" (442) into mistaking Sophia for Jenny Cameron. The narrator portrays the landlord--who (he notes) has the reputation for wisdom--as a man whose reasoning reflects that of the gullible masses. He and his wife are first swayed into mistaking Sophia for nobility by their received notions of nobility. Romance ideology triumphs over empiricism when the landlady's experience of the rudeness of nobility is overrun by her husband's <u>a priori</u> notions about the gentleness of true nobility. Then, when the Jacobite squire brings them news of a French invasion in support of Prince Charles, they show their readiness to be swayed by the spurious testaments of eyewitness accounts. Thus the landlady's own experience,

grounded in empirical fact, is displaced by the Romance notion of an ideal nobility which is then supported by the false history of a French invasion. The landlord's credulous acceptance of the eyewitness testimony of the deluded Jacobite squire suggests the stance of naive empiricism. The landlord's belief in an ideal nobility, which deludes him into mistaking Sophia, suggests an adherence to Romance ideology. Both of these instances lead to behaviour which, although treated lightly by the narrator, is criticized by Fielding. Despite the narrator's seeming benevolence in his treatment of the Squire and the landlord, the ironical paradox in the Squire's utterance "Ten thousand honest Frenchmen are landed in Suffolk. Old England for ever!" (XI,2,441) ridicules the Squire and reveals an unsympathetic attitude toward Jacobite sympathizers. When the narrator comments, "This News determined the Opinion of the wise Man" (XI,2,442), Fielding means to disparage the gullible acceptance of the "News" as well as the landlord's treasonous opportunism. Although the text still relies on historicizing elements through which to gain credibility, the naive acceptance of "history" is given a critical portrayal in the narrative.

Jenny Cameron need not, of course, have an actual historical referent to bolster the text's historical illusion. To a reader of the twentieth century her name likely rings no bells, but the manner in which her name is invoked conveys a weighty portentousness that invests the name "Jenny Cameron" with an unspecified, evocative importance. The existence of Jenny Cameron as an historical

fact, however, forges not only a link between the text's fictional and historical worlds, but also between the text of Tom Jones and the historical reality outside of the text. In this way, by representing historical figures--even if only in name--alongside fictional characters, the text garners the prestige of the historical document. Jenny Cameron never 'appears' in the text as a character. Her presence within the fictional world is strictly textual, existing only as a name; but this presence nevertheless exemplifies how the personalities and events of an historical era inform the fictional world of Tom Jones and invest it with an air of historical authenticity.

When historical figures are incorporated into the narrative as participants, however, the text becomes situated in the traditions of both History and Romance. Each infuses the other with its authority, but ultimately draws attention to the limits of the other's boundaries. Richard "Beau" Nash, another historical figure, participates as a character in the embedded narrative of Mrs. Fitzpatrick: "And here I cannot omit expressing my Gratitude to the Kindness intended me by Mr. Nash; who took me one Day aside, and gave me Advice, which if I had followed, I had been a happy Woman. 'Child," says he, . . . '" (XI,iv,446). Using the name of an historical personality who lived until 1762 in a book whose fourth edition was published in 1750 and making the historical figure interact with the fictional characters intensifies the text's illusion of historical veracity. At the same time this strategy draws attention to the boundary that exists between fiction and reality. In

the dedication to George Lyttelton, Fielding conflates the notions of Romance and History when he writes, "Again, Sir, without your Assistance this History had never been completed. Be not startled at the Assertion. I do not intend to draw on you the Suspicion of being a Romance Writer" (5). In the opening Bill of Fare chapter, the narrator similarly conflates the two traditions by suggesting that what differentiates his History from the "Romances, Novels, Plays and Poems" with which his work shares its "Subject [Human Nature], is the Author's skill in well dressing it up" (I,i,26). While defining itself as a History, the text never disowns its Romance genealogy because within that tradition exists the right of the author to invent history. Fielding eschews the attempts of authors such as Defoe and Richardson to establish for their works a rigorous illusion of an extant historical document. He does this by incorporating elements into his text that draw attention to his own works' fictitiousness despite his narrator's claims to represent historical actuality.

Fielding certainly does not mean for his fictional characters to be taken as actual persons. Although Mr. Nash speaks with Mrs. Fitzgerald, the reader knows their conversation is a fiction. Fielding, however, is at no pains to disavow the historical veracity of his characters. Like the narrator's ambiguous descriptions of his work, the relationship between the historical and the fictional characters obscures identification of the text as a Romance or History. By including Mr. Nash as a participant in the fictional world, Fielding illustrates the fictionality of

history. Historians do impose imaginative constructions upon historical figures. Reversing this process, Fielding incorporates historical figures into his fiction. With the reader aware of the historical existence of Mr. Nash, Fielding's strategy, in the very act of blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, draws attention to this distinction. This in effect alerts the reader to the fictionalization of history by alerting the reader to the historicization of fiction. Fielding's text refuses to be pinned down. Its historicizing elements are contained by an awareness of the artifice with which history is constructed.

The text's containment of historicizing elements captures History's authority while creating a liaison between History and Romance. The text's playfulness, however, always makes this liaison rather tenuous. One of the most striking examples of play is the inclusion of a reference to an extra-textual Mr. King. The reference is distinguished by the narrator's address to the Reader:

> The Coach, which had brought the young Lady and her Maid, and which perhaps, the Reader may have hitherto concluded was her own, was indeed a returned Coach belonging to Mr. King of Bath, one of the worthiest and honestest Men that ever dealt in Horse-flesh, and whose Coaches we heartily recommend to all our Readers who travel that Road. By which Means they may, perhaps, have the Pleasure of riding in the very coach, and being driven by the very Coachman, that is recorded in this History. (X,vi,417-18)

It matters little whether Mr. King actually existed; this paragraph powerfully links Tom Jones with an extra-textual reality. Unlike most other historical characters, Mr. King, who like Jenny Cameron appears only in 'name,' has no impact on the narrative. While Mr. Nash participates in the fictional events of the narrative by giving prudent but unheeded advice to Harriet, and Jenny Cameron's presence in the novel leads the landlord to mistake Sophia's identity and reveals his opportunism, Mr. King plays no such role; he is absolutely superfluous to the text's fictional elements. The passage asserts the possibility that the "Readers" might ride in "the very coach, and [be] driven by the very Coachman, that is recorded in this History." This boggling claim to represent historical reality similarly asserts an historical existence for the text's fictional elements. If the narrator here refers to a specific, historically extant coach and coachman, then by imposing fictional events upon this historical reality, Fielding undermines the text's illusion of historical reality. But it seems that he, in asserting the factual existence of some elements of his narrative, asserts the factual existence of all of his narrative: that if the reader were able to meet the coachman of the history, then the reader would be able to meet the characters whom the coach carried. In other words, if the coach and coachman carried Sophia and Mrs. Honour, and if--as the narrator asserts--the Reader can meet the coachman, then the Reader can also meet Sophia and (by extension) the rest of the fictional cast. This instance is one of the text's most powerful claims to historicity. It is also one

of the most playful, drawing attention to, and implicating the reader of the text in, the fictional world of the text being read. Mr. King's coach might refer to an actual coach, owned by an actual Mr. King and in which Fielding had ridden; but only the most naive reader believes that such a coach, even if it did exist, carried the fictional Sophia.

The historicizing elements, with which the fictional elements in Tom Jones are enmeshed, empower the narrative to tell historical truth through its deployment of empirically verifiable facts. The strategy of blending fictional creations into the representations of historical reality and of altering historical reality to conform to fictional events indicates that the text's historicizing elements function as more than empiricist illusion. Although the historicizing elements do bring the text authority, this authority is tempered by the narrative strategy that highlights the fictitiousness of history and the arbitrary nature of the boundary between fact and fiction.

Whereas historical elements empower the narrative to tell truth with the authority of facts, fictional elements invoke the authority of poetry's claims to tell a universal truth. This rule descends from at least as far back as Aristotle's Poetics, in which he promulgated the theory of art as imitation. Sir Philip Sidney, in An Apology for Poetry, agrees with the Aristotelian conception of mimesis that art should imitate nature: "There is no Arte delivered to mankinde that hath not the workes of Nature for his principal object" (Sidney 194). He states further that poetry need not be "tied to any such subjection" (195) as to

"followe Nature" (195). By this argument the poet gains license to create "New formes such as never were in Nature: as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like" (195). Aristotle's claim that the poet should idealize his object "according to the law of probability or necessity" (Aristotle 25) does not preclude a fantastical world, so long as that world adheres to its own laws of probability. As a writer in the age of empiricism, however, Fielding could not consider writing "idle Romances which are filled with Monsters" (IV,i,113) unless he did so with a mitigating irony. Fielding's Tom Jones is a fictional representation that is firmly grounded in the materials of the actual world, though the intervention of fortune and of coincidence in the novel's plot expresses Fielding's belief in a divine presence that ultimately orders the messy reality of the phenomenal realm.[3] Tom Jones often seems to document an historical truth. The artistry and the contrivances of the author/narrator, however, inform the text and lead to a plot resolution in favour of the deserving Tom and Sophia. The deviation from historical truth, suggested here, points out the verisimilar nature of the text--a collection of imaginary events that expresses an author's notion of what the actual world might be while he pretends to represent it.

Through the genre of history a writer relates only phenomenal occurrences while through verisimilar literature

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[3] On how Fielding's belief in a divine order is expressed in his novels, see Martin Battestin "Fielding: The Argument of Design" and "Fielding: The Definition of Wisdom" in his The Providence of Wit (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 141-192.

a writer need only appear to do so. McKeon notes that in "seventeenth-century prose narrative, verisimilitude and the claim to historicity [were] incompatible and competitive expressions of [the early modern historicist] revolution" (53). The term verisimilitude is thus differentiated both from History and from Romance. Fielding's narrator actively disparages Romance for its unnaturalness. Verisimilitude, however, remains a Romance-based discourse, since within limits it allows free reign to the poet's imagination. It therefore opposes the fact-based discourse of History. The truth-telling authority of History is undermined in Fielding's novels as a way of gaining an authority that rests outside of that tradition. The self-reflective quality of the text's historicizing elements draws attention to the status of any text, even history, as an imaginative construct at some level. However, despite the narrator's contention in the opening chapter that he will offer nothing in his Bill of Fare apart from Human Nature, the text's authority does not simply rely on that of verisimilar literature. The strategy Fielding employs to mediate between the historicist perspective and the verisimilar is to create a self-referring textuality in the novel that, by continually drawing critical attention to itself, allows Fielding to present his verisimilar ideas in an ostensibly historicist discourse.

The verisimilar intention of the text is announced in the opening Bill of Fare chapter. The narrator admits that The History of a Foundling shares the same subject (Human Nature) with "all the Romances, Novels, Plays and Poems,

with which the Stalls abound" (I,i,26). However, the chapter's comparison between an Author's treatment of Human Nature and a Cook's treatment of a piece of meat suggests how the hands of an unskillful Author can degrade the subject of Human Nature:

> The same Animal which hath the Honour to have some Part of his Flesh eaten at the Table of a Duke, may perhaps be degraded in another Part, and some of his Limbs gibbeted, as it were, in the vilest Stall in Town. (I,i,26).

In this simile the Animal represents the Author's subject of human nature. A skillful Cook can prepare an animal fit for the table of a Duke. If unskillfully prepared, the animal becomes "degraded" and sold in a vile stall. The Cook represents the Author. If skillfully dressed, the subject of Human Nature is fit for noble consumption. This passage sets up a revealing opposition concerning the 'Animal's' ultimate destination. The "vilest Stall" suggests the vulgar display of crass commercialism from which the Duke's table is free. The "degraded" parts of the animal are associated, through the word "Stall," with those abundant "Romances, Novels, Plays and Poems." This passage, then, portrays the Romance as an authorial degradation of the subject of Human Nature. Associating the Romance ("degraded" Human Nature) with the Stall's implicit commercialism suggests there lies a pecuniary motivation behind the degradation of Human Nature into Romance. The table of the Duke, which suggests the tradition of noble patronage, is opposed to the "Stall," which suggests the

modern custom of an author who sells literature the way a butcher sells "gibbeted" meat. The word "gibbeted" outside of the context of the simile denotes the display of executed criminals for Public relish and scorn. The public's taste, which in Tom Jones becomes a concern of the narrator, often runs to a preference for the outrageous. The idea that a Romance writer displays Human Nature gibbeted suggests how the outrageousness of Romance panders to the Public's vulgar taste. By promising an adherence to Human Nature, the narrator distances Tom Jones from the Romance tradition while staking a claim to tell truth through a verisimilar representation of Human Nature.

The difference between the text of Tom Jones and the Romances it disparages resides, according to the narrator, in the Author's skill. The Author's "well dressing [the subject of human nature] up" relies not only on the Author's command of a range of literary styles--from the "more plain and simple" to the "hash and ragoo [of] the high French and Italian Seasoning of Affectation" (I,i,27)--but also on the Author's ability to remain true to Human Nature. Establishing a text as an instance of verisimilitude different from the fantasies of Romance requires the text to differ in degree but not in kind. Although the text is situated carefully within an historicist discourse, it must still create a fiction that does not cross the line that separates the verisimilar from the fantastic.

When the narrator disparages Romance inventions as outlandishly false fantasies of another age or of simpler minds, he tacitly asserts the truth of his own inventions.

The careful manoeuvring of the text between the claims to history and to verisimilitude can be seen in the narrator's textual acrobatics in XVII,i. The chapter's opening paragraph refers to the craft of the writer:

> When a Comic Writer hath made his principal Characters as happy as he can; or when a Tragic Writer hath brought them to the highest Pitch of human Misery, they both conclude their Business to be done, and that their Work is come to a Period. (XVII,i,675)

The Comic Writer makes his characters happy. The Tragic Writer makes his miserable. By emphasizing the power a Writer has over his character creations, this passage portrays the narrative as a solely imaginary construct. This representation of the Writer as a manipulator of plot and character reflects on the narrator of Tom Jones, suggesting that he has such a relationship with his characters. This idea is strengthened when, in the succeeding paragraph, he speculates that, "Had we been of the Tragic Complexion, the Reader must now allow we were very nearly arrived at this Period" (XVII,i,675). The final sentence of this paragraph, "What then remains to complete the Tragedy but a Murder or two, and a few moral Sentences" (XVII,i,675), not only draws attention to the act of writing within certain conventions, it implicates the narrator in the act to which he is drawing attention. The conditional phrase "Had we been," which indicates that the narrator is not of the Tragic Complexion, nevertheless situates him within the Tragic-Comic Writer camp. If he is not a Tragic

then he is a Comic Writer. The paragraph's final sentence therefore indicates that although the narrator will not whip up "a Murder or Two, and a few moral Sentences," he is more than willing because of his Comic inclinations to contrive a happy ending.

The references at the beginning of XVII,i to writers who completely control their characters and plots are followed in the chapter's third paragraph by references to the narrator's own relationship with his characters. Whereas the earlier depiction of writers implies their works are entirely constructs of and subject to the writers' own imagination, the latter shows that the Tom Jones narrator lacks such omnipotence. The effort needed to arrange a happy ending, the narrator decides, "seems a much harder Task [than concluding the narrative as a tragedy]; a Task indeed so hard that we do not undertake to execute it" (XVII,i,675). This sentence implies that the sequence of circumstances that will lead to a conclusion pleasing to both hero and heroine lies beyond the narrator's imaginative powers. The narrator's sense of his own inability to imagine such a sequence of events situates him amongst those writers who conjure up fictional worlds. This is borne out by the narrator's (ironic) speculation concerning Sophia's fate: "In Regard to Sophia, it is more than probable, that we shall somewhere or other provide a good Husband for her in the End, either Blifil, or my Lord, or Somebody else" (XVII,i,675). The narrator's consideration of alternate nuptial partners for Sophia suggests that the narrator, as

writer, has not yet decided the outcome of the story.[4] The phrase "we shall . . . provide" illustrates that the narrator is still the actant in the writer-character relationship. The evocation of the narrator's omnipotence is, however, quickly abrogated. The narrator's comment that Jones's dilemma is "owing to his Imprudence" (XVII,i,657) shifts the locus of power from the narrator to a character. Making Jones bear the responsibility of his own imprudence effects an historicizing distance between the writer and his creation. With Tom as author of his own fate, the narrator's status modulates towards that of an historian. After this modulation, the text introduces a more obvious historicizing element with the narrator's invitation to the Reader to lose no "Time in taking a first Row at Tyburn" (XVII,i,657), so as to enjoy Tom's probable execution.

Although the historicizing elements in the first paragraphs of XVII,i distance the narrator's text from completely verisimilar texts, verisimilitude is by no means disparaged. Rather, the argument in the opening paragraphs seem first to underwrite the authority of the writer of imaginative works, then to claim it, and then finally to differ from it first when the narrator evinces an inability to pursue the imaginative project and then by suggesting an historicizing autonomy for the characters. The narrator endorses verisimilar literature by disparaging the deus ex machina convention of mythology and Romance. He pledges to

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[4] This pretence of the narrator is of course ironic; the reader is pretty well assured of the outcome by the narrator's comforting benevolence, and the narrator, as is clear by the novel's ending, is fully aware of how his history will conclude.

lend Jones "none of that Supernatural Assistance with which we [writers] are entrusted" (XVII,i,657), maintaining that "If he doth not . . . find some natural Means of fairly extricating himself . . . we will do no Violence to the Truth and Dignity of History for his Sake" (XVII,i,657-6). Reference to a "Supernatural Assistance" recalls the power of a writer to intrude into his own text and portrays the text as subject to an author's will and imagination. Eschewing his right to intrude with Supernatural Assistance and relying instead on "natural Means" illustrates the narrator's commitment to verisimilitude. The events by which Jones extricates himself must not seem super- or unnatural, they must seem probable. The narrator's dependence on historicity to bolster his claim to verisimilitude is shown by his concern for the "Truth and Dignity of History." The doctrines of verisimilitude and historicity here conflate in an alliance against Romance convention. The reason these doctrines seem compatible is that the narrator represents narratives first as objects completely subjugated to the writer's whim, then as objects which evince some of their own power, then finally as objects which must conform to rules of verisimilitude and which, since the characters are represented as (somewhat) autonomous, are grounded in historical fact.

The final two paragraphs of XVII,i reiterate this strategy, though with a more pointed attack on Romance conventions and with less emphasis on History. The references to "Mythology," "Deities," "Genii," and "Fairies" (XVII,676) more clearly evoke the apparatus of Romance

convention than did similar references earlier in the chapter. The narrator's remark that the Antients' Deities "were always ready at the Writer's Elbow to execute any of their purposes" (XVII,i,676) draws attention again to the events in a narrative as the product of a writer's imagination. The narrator complains that the Antient Writers could "with greater Ease have conveyed a Heroe from one Country to another, nay from one World to another, and have brought him back again, than a poor circumscribed Modern can deliver him from a Goal [sic]" (XVII,i,676). Here the narrator implicitly nullifies the autonomous, historical existence of Jones to which the text had previously hinted, thereby placing the writer back into the authoritative position of determining the narrative. The historicist elements have been factored out of the argument that privileges verisimilar fiction not only over improbable Romance but over History. The narrator's ultimate comment on this matter acknowledges the text as an imaginative contrivance confined not by the "Truth and Dignity of History" but by the doctrine of verisimilitude: "To natural Means alone are we confined; let us try therefore what by these Means may be done for poor Jones" (XVII,i,676).

The Mediating Narrator

Consistent with his portrayal as both artist and historian, the narrator of Tom Jones mediates a balance between the discourses of history and verisimilitude in a text that privileges verisimilitude without blatantly negating its claims to historicity. While the text always problematizes its moments of historicity, its claims to verisimilitude are asserted unambiguously. Since, however, historicity and verisimilitude are competing discourses, the narrator, who propounds both of these traditions of telling truth, exhibits an anxiety regarding his status, the status of his text, and his relation to it and to the Reader.

The narrator situates himself carefully within the conflicting discourses of Tom Jones, surrendering neither his claim to historicity nor his right to invent history. The narrator's comments situate him at various times within the text's fictional dimension and at other times within the extra-fictional dimension of the text. Generally, when the narrator speaks from the fictional dimension he is acting out his role of an historian gathering facts; when he speaks from the extra-textual dimension he plays the role of an author who pieces together a text either out of his supposed collection of historical facts or out of his own imagination. By far the greater number of instances situate him in the extra-fictional dimension. The narrator

distances himself from the events of the narrative by foregrounding his roles as historian and storyteller. From his distanced perspective the narrator passes judgement on his own work, anticipates the critics, and comments on others' works. At one point in the text, the narrator's relation of an anecdote reveals the spatial and temporal distance between himself and the events of the narrative:

> On this Subject, Reader, I must stop a Moment to tell thee a Story. 'The famous Nell Gwynn, stepping one Day from a House where she had made a short Visit into her Coach . . .' (XI,8,462)

This story, or rather analogy, is meant to shed light on the passion Mrs. Honour expresses at the self-deluded landlord, after he mistakes Sophia for Jenny Cameron. The epithet "famous" applied to Nell Gwynn presupposes a shared knowledge of a particular society in a particular space at a particular time. The narrator assumes when he says "The famous Nell . . ." that the Reader is cognizant of the historical figure of "Eleanor Gwyn (1650-1687), notable comic actress, though illiterate, and mistress of Charles II" (Baker's note, Tom Jones 462). Of course, the Reader need not possess this awareness for the analogy to be any more effective. Any name after "The famous" would produce the same effect, whether or not that name had any genuine historical referent.[5] The narrator stops telling the

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[5] I'm not arguing here against special ontological status for the representation of historical figures within a fictional discourse, rather that words without genuine historical referents can evoke an air of historicity and pretend to that special status if it exists. As it turns out, and as I will argue, the ultimately

Reader a story to tell the Reader another story. He interrupts the fictional narrative with a story from the extra-fictional world--the world of history. The introduction of this famous, extra-fictional character into the text does not obtrude yet another historical figure into the fictional world. Rather, this historical figure and the short anecdote in which she is represented have an analogous relationship to the fictional realm. The relationship between Nell and her footman is meant to illuminate the relationship between Sophia and Mrs. Honour. The narrator's presumption of sharing with the Reader an historical knowledge from which he can draw an analogy familiar to the Reader situates the narrator and the Reader (and the famous Nell Gwynn) in the extra-fictional, historical dimension of the text.

Since the boundaries between the fictional and the historical worlds are often blurred in Tom Jones, it is not surprising that neither the narrator nor the Reader is confined to the historical dimension. The narrator poses as a gatherer of facts who must adhere to the historical truth, but who yet must filter the mass of facts so as to glean the most relevant to "his" history. There are, therefore, two histories, one in which the narrator, reader and the famous Nell Gwynn and Mr. King are situated, and another in which

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verisimilar stance of the narrative in relation to the narrator gives characters such as Tom fictional status because they are ultimately the narrator's creations. The narrator, whose historical existence is never questioned and who is conversant with the text's extra-fictional dimension, holds the status of an historical figure.

the characters and events of the narrative are situated. Another way of looking at this is that there are two sets of facts--one historical, the other fictional. The deployment of the fictional facts--Sophia, Tom, his banishment--actualizes the reality of the narrative. The historical facts--the background rebellion, Jenny Cameron, Mr. Nash--actualize the reality of the narrator, creating the illusion of his historical existence.

While his own historical existence is never challenged, the narrator expresses a playful anxiety in his efforts to assert the historical veracity of the text's fictional dimension. In establishing this veracity for the fictional characters, the narrator often lets slip a small comment that suggests that a sort of communication has taken place between himself and some of the characters. In his relation of the King of the Gypsies episode, for example, the narrator indicates that the source of this episode is Tom Jones himself: "and yet there seemed (as Mr. Jones said) to be somewhat in his Air which denoted Authority" (XII,xii,512). Since Tom never relates this to anyone inside the narrative, he must have related it outside. This instance of attributing the source of at least Tom's perception of the Gypsy King to Tom himself evokes the idea of an interview which had to have been conducted between Tom and the note-taking narrator (or the narrator's correspondent) sometime between the events of the narrative and the narration of the events. These instances situate the narrator in the text's historical dimension, where he plays his role of fact-gatherer.

These references to a character's extra-fictional existence are constructed in such a fashion, however, as never to compromise the narrator's position as author, or creator of the narrative. The narrator, at one point, asserts a paternal relationship with the characters in such a way as to make the status of his characters, whether historically extant or figments of his imagination, difficult to determine:

> As I regard all the Personages of this History in the Light of my Children; so I must confess the same inclination of Partiality to Sophia; and for that I hope the Reader will allow me the same Excuse, from the Superiority of her Character.
>
> This extraordinary Tenderness, which I have for my Heroine, never suffers me to quit her any long Time without the utmost Reluctance. I could now, therefore, return impatiently to enquire what happened to this lovely Creature since her Departure from her Father's, but that I am obliged first to pay a short Visit to Mr. Blifil. (XVI, vi, 660)

The narrator's paternal sentiment for his characters, of course, might be intended to express the relationship between an artist and his art. In this case, the character of Sophia, of which the narrator is so fond, would be entirely his fictional creation. As an artistic creation, Sophia would be subject to the creative whims of the artist. The seat of power, however, seems to be occupied by Sophia, the creation, rather than the narrator, the creator. It is

the artist who feels "extraordinary Tenderness" and who feels compelled to remain attendant on his creation. This might merely express the expected relationship between an artist and his or her creation, especially when the creation embodies an ideal beloved by the artist. While the analogy of a familial relationship, however, does not negate the idea of an expression of love that an artist can have for his or her creation, neither does analogy emphasize such an idea. This passage seems as much intended to express the kind of paternal propriety an artist has over his creation as it is intended to express the affection one would have for a number of individuals with whom one is intimate. The former instance gives the narrator's creativity free reign, the latter restricts his creativity to commentary and stylistic considerations in his representation of the characters' histories.

The fictional characters are made to seem as though they have a life apart from what is merely recorded in the fictional dimension of the text. This appearance reinforces the empiricist illusion and validates the narrator's claims to historicity. One of the ways in which this claim is made is to convey the idea that the action of the narrative takes place outside the influence of the narrator. The narrator often explains the characters' motivations, but does so not

with the authority of the omniscient narrator,[6] nor with the authority of the author who imposes some motivation upon the character; instead, he does so with the authority of the empirical scientist who surmises reasonable explanations after examining factual evidence. As a means to end his relationship with Lady Bellaston, Tom sends her a written proposal of marriage she is sure to refuse. Lady Bellaston sends Tom's proposal to Mrs. Western ostensibly as an aid in securing a marriage between Sophia and Lord Fellamar. On the authority of "human Nature, Page almost the last" (XVI,viii,667), however, the narrator attributes Lady Bellaston's motives to jealousy and spite, after which he writes,

> If [the Reader] will not be contented with these Reasons, I freely confess I see no other Motive to the Actions of that Lady, unless we will conceive she was bribed by Lord Fellamar, which for my own Part I see no Cause to suspect. (XVI,8,668)

The narrator does not negate the possibility of some other motive for Lady Bellaston's behaviour; indeed, he himself brings another up. His argument against the possibility of Lord Fellamar's involvement rests on (the lack of) empirical evidence. The narrator sees no evidence to support the

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[6] The narrator's many professions of the difficulty he has in gathering facts and the doubt he sometimes expresses regarding motivation seriously compromise assertions of his omniscience. The instances in which he demonstrates an omniscient power in the discovery of a character's hidden thoughts can be attributed to his genius "or rather those Powers of the Mind, which are capable of penetrating into all Things within our Reach and Knowledge" (IX,i,372).

bribe hypothesis. The second possibility is not evident to the senses, whereas the first is supported by the authority the narrator has invested in the doctrine of verisimilitude.

In addition to perpetuating the empiricist illusion, the narrator's introduction and quick negation of the Lord Fellamar possibility illustrates the narrator's relationship with the characters of the narrative. Merely raising the possibility of an alternative motive for a character's actions portrays the narrator not as an inventor of stories and characters over whom he has a puppet-master's authority, but rather as an historian, who must gather and glean facts and then construct the best possible narrative he can from what he gathers. Since the narrator has not gathered any facts that point to Lord Fellamar's involvement, he consults the book of "human Nature" and draws a conclusion from the facts he does have. Lady Bellaston gives the letter to Lady Western according to human Nature because a woman once pleased in "the Possession of a Man, will go half way to the Devil, to prevent any other Woman from enjoying the same" (XVI,8,668). Although the doctrine may be faulty the appeal to it is sincere. The narrator thus appears as an historian beset with the same problem with which every historian grapples: what sense to make of an incoherent sea of facts.

When the narrator adopts the methods (and authority) of the historian, he carefully defines what type of historian he is. The subtitle of II,i classifies the work as a "kind of a History" (58). The narrator, in this chapter, distinguishes between the historian who "disclose[s] the Revolutions of Countries" (58) and the

> painful and voluminous Historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his Series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much Paper with the Detail of Months and Years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable Eras when the greatest Scenes have been transacted on the Human Stage. (58)

In addition to the traditional criticism--that historians impose narratives upon historical facts--Fielding adds the criticism which was most devastating in the eighteenth century: dulness. Within this accusation, however, lies another criticism. Little shall be learned from an author who merely reflects life. Accusing an author of compiling a catalogue of dull facts is not only a disparagement of dull history but also an implicit endorsement of the artistic manipulation or invention of such facts. The choice of which facts to include is itself an artistic decision. When the narrator refers to his own decision to exclude facts on account of their dulness, or irrelevance, he draws attention to his role as a manipulator of 'historical' data, thereby announcing the artifice inherent in any textual representation of fact. But it is the role of historian he adopts here, not the role of a writer of fiction. The narrator plays the role of an historian to bring acceptance to the role of a writer of fiction. The strategy of continually foregrounding the artistic decisions facing an historian reflects positively upon the writer who is simply an artist and not an historian.

This strategy includes the disparagement of historians

who merely, one could say inartistically, catalogue facts. The narrator in his role of historian associates himself with that style of history that allows him the most artistic leeway:

> When an extraordinary Scene presents itself, (as we trust will often be the Case) we shall spare no Pains nor Paper to open it at large to our Reader; but if whole Years should pass without producing any Thing worthy his Notice, we shall not be afraid of a Chasm in our History; but shall hasten on to Matters of Consequence and leave such Periods of Time totally unobserved. (II,i,59)

The narrator's promise to include only things worthy of the Reader's notice seems to focus the concern of the narrator upon the Reader, though this concern can be construed as a rationalization for not adhering to an exhaustive historical style.[7] The fervour with which the narrator berates the dull historian suggests an anxiety over the status of his preferred method of recording history. In the same chapter that describes "what Kind of History" is Tom Jones, the narrator attacks the Historian whose works, "resemble a News-paper, which consists of just the same Number of Words,

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[7] Ultimately, the narrator's concern lies with the Reader. The concern the narrator evinces for the Reader when, for example, he suppresses the desire to write a descriptive passage for fear the Reader would "skip it over entirely" (XII,iii,480), suggests an anxiousness to please the Reader as much as to disparage writing belaboured with descriptive passages. Of course, the narrator is being comically anxious in regards to the possible reception of his text and so is not pandering to the Reader so much as obliquely remarking the manner (which I will elaborate later) in which society's expectations affect an artist's project.

whether there be any News in it or not" (58), and later on the Historian who, as Time's secretary, must keep pace with Time and travel just "as slowly through Centuries of monkish Dulness, when the World seems to have been asleep, as through [a] bright and busy Age" (58). Throughout his text, the narrator employs a strategy of distancing himself from the dull historian. In some instances, the narrator alerts the Reader that dull facts are being excluded from the narrative ("But not to detain the Reader with what is common . . ." (XII,7,492)); in other instances, disparaging references are made to histories that are full of dull facts ("we have, ourselves, been very often most horridly given to jumping, as we have run through the Pages of voluminous Historians" (XII,3,480)). By eschewing a particular style of history, rather than the tradition of history itself, the narrator draws upon himself the status of the type of historian he himself has validated. At the same time he draws attention away from the fact that the text itself is fiction and not history. Although the narrator anxiously distances himself from the recording of dull historical facts, he does so only to the extent that his artistic license is established without jeopardizing the text's claim to historical authenticity.

Although the narrator claims for his text the status of history, he claims also to have "founded a new Province of Writing" (II,i,58). Since the writing of history was not a new Province, the narrator here differentiates his text not only from dull history, but, in a subtle way, from history itself. Despite the narrator's professed authority to

invent laws necessary to govern this "new Province," he most often refers to traditionally accepted laws for writing history. His most ubiquitous assertion as an historian is to "Record Truth" (XIV,v,582) or "to remain true to facts" (VII,xii,287). Although these assertions seem not to differ from history's methodology, the narrator invokes these laws most usually to pre-empt criticism of his history as unnatural or improbable. The narrator therefore applies the rules of verisimilar literature to preserve the historicist illusion of his text. After the narrator relates the episode in which Northerton supposedly kills Jones, he expresses surprise that before attempting to preserve "the Life of the wounded Person" (VII,xii,287) the soldiers would have busied themselves with "the securing of Northerton" (287):

> We mention this Observation, not with any View of pretending to account for so odd a Behaviour, but lest some Critic should hereafter plume himself on discovering it. We would have these Gentlemen know we can see what is odd in Characters as well as themselves, but it is our Business to relate Facts as they are; which when we have done, it is the Part of the learned and sagacious Reader to consult that original Book of Nature, whence every Passage in our Work is transcribed, tho' we quote not always the particular Page for its Authority. (VII,xii,287)

The narrator's appeal to the "Book of Nature" to justify what he feels is odd behaviour is a variation on what McKeon

calls the "strange therefore true" topos. This topos came into being as a device through which narratives made claims to historicity (McKeon 47). McKeon remarks that especially travel writers would use a "strange but true" topos to bring credibility to their incredible narratives. The strange therefore true topos came into being after its predecessor became so familiar that an event's incredibleness became paradoxically its own claim to credibility. Utterly fantastic events were validated by the historicizing context in which they were presented. In this instance, the behaviour of the first Company in apprehending Northerton does not seem so fantastic as to warrant the narrator's anxious intrusion. Although McKeon remarks that writers deployed the strange therefore true topos without irony (McKeon 47), Fielding seems to be using the topos here somewhat ironically. The effect, rather than to render acceptable to the Reader an incredible event in a text that claims historical veracity, is simply to reinforce the historical veracity of the text. After all, the "fact" that seems so odd to the narrator is not so odd as to necessitate the narrator's exhortation to the Reader to verify that "fact" in the Book of Nature. The strange therefore true topos here modulates back towards the strange but true topos with the difference being in the quality of strangeness: strange, but not so strange as to seem incredible after considering the Book of Nature. In other words, the blatant claim to historicity that McKeon remarks in certain narratives, which displayed an "insistence that the very appearance of the incredible itself [held] the status of a

claim to historicity" (McKeon 47), is ironized by a deflation of the "appearance of the incredible." By arguing large matters, small ones will pass unnoticed; the narrator's effort to defend (as natural) an incident that did not seem unnatural to begin with creates a topos of anxious integrity through his adherence to the true (whether verisimilar or historical) representation of human nature.

Because the narrator appeals for recognition of the type of truth his text purports to express, the passage from VII,xii,287 delineates the text's epistemological boundaries. It also emphasizes the anxiety of the narrator over his text's authority to tell truth. The narrator expresses a fear that the Critics might be able to undermine the authority of his text by attacking its credibility. And while the narrator locates the authority for his text in the "Book of Nature," this authority seems to rely extensively upon the Reader's ability to apply the authoritative Book of Nature to the text. The authority for the narrator's text depends therefore upon the Reader. Since the text's authority is found ultimately in the Reader, the narrator adopts an ironically anxious persona as a way of inoffensively asserting his own authority. The narrator attacks the Critic's inability to consult the "Book of Nature," but distinguishes him from the "(learned and sagacious) Reader" who has that ability. The Critic is disparaged for not getting his eyes beyond the mere facts to consult the Book of Nature. The methodology of history implied in the expression "relate the Facts as they are" is therefore subjugated to the rules of verisimilitude implicit

in the Book of Nature. And the Reader is flattered for his knowledge of this.

As a way of modulating his claim to historicity towards a justification of verisimilitude, the narrator, despite declaring that his business is to relate Facts as they are, greatly disparages the relation of unmediated facts. The narrator's concern over facts helps develop his role as historian, though his strategy of drawing attention to the sifting and ordering of facts establishes history's authority to tell truth without being chained to its laws. Justifying the manipulation of historical facts as a way to spare the Reader from dulness empowers the narrator to mediate further between the Reader and history. He places, of course, no restrictions on the manner in which he mediates the 'facts,' other than his promise to adhere to Human Nature. The justification of his mediation underwrites the creativity with which the narrator imposes an artistic form upon the text.

As though to reinforce the impression of historical veracity, the text depicts the narrator as an eyewitness who is subject to the eyewitness's usual fallibility. In a narrative which sports characters whose eyewitness accounts are miniature Romance narratives, the narrator's own credibility is reinforced by his admissions of problems encountered in rendering an accurate account. At one point, after Mrs. Honour informs Mrs. Western of her indifference to a threatened dismissal, the narrator's stance as a fallible eyewitness is revealed by his (or his reporter's) inability to hear properly what was said:

> Mrs. Western spoke, or rather thundered, in Answer; but as she was hardly articulate, we cannot be very certain of the identical Words: We shall, therefore, omit inserting a Speech, which, at best, would not greatly redound to her Honour. (VII,viii,271)

The narrator seems to seek greater representational precision by substituting the word "thundered" for the word "spoke." The substitution of one word for another that more accurately conveys his perception of Mrs. Western's speech illustrates his commitment to relate facts as they are. The remark that the speech would not redound to her Honour suggests that the narrator, though determined to stick to the facts, is nevertheless loath to represent anyone in a bad light. Perhaps a sense of propriety compels the narrator to suppress the fact that a Lady would be capable of unleashing a volley of low-brow oaths. Without misrepresenting the facts, the narrator apparently uses the inarticulation of Mrs. Western's Answer to avoid the gritty realism of attributing to her a presumably harsh speech through direct discourse.

Elsewhere the narrator delights in shifting register when recording the speech of characters who do not enjoy Mrs. Western's status as a Lady. Here, for example, are Squire Western's thoughts concerning the possible father of Molly Seagrim's unborn child:

> I smoke it: I smoke it. Tom is certainly the Father of this Bastard. 'Zooks, Parson you remember how he recommended the Veather o'her to

> me. --D--n un, what a sly B--ch 'tis. Ay, ay, as sure as Two-pence, Tom is the Veather of the Bastard. (IV,x,142)

By preserving Mrs. Western from a similar slip into the vernacular, the narrator evinces some of the good breeding to which he often pretends: "We shall therefore take our leave of Sophia and with our usual Good-Breeding, attend her Ladyship" (XVI,iv,650). Although the narrator may be using his Good-Breeding as a justification to suppress Mrs. Western's speech, he retains the facade of "relating facts as they are." The facts are that Mrs. Western thundered her Answer; her answer was inarticulate. The difficulty in gathering empirical evidence is foregrounded here, situating the narrator within the time and space of the narrative as a fact-gathering historian. The ironizing gentleness with which the narrator treats the fact of Mrs. Western's speech, however, suggests the artistry that comes into play in any representation of facts and further illustrates how historical facts must not only pass through the distorting mirror of language, but likewise, via language, through the distorting conventions and norms of the historian's society.

The similarity between the necessity of having to order facts in history and the construction of a fictional narrative is not lost on the narrator. Conscious of his avowal to avoid being bogged down in the minutiae of boring historical detail, the narrator records the presumably trivial detail that has large consequences with a great deal of self-referentiality. The narrator, for example, takes pains to justify the recording of the episode in which Tom

retrieves Sophia's Muff from the fireplace:

> Though this Incident will probably appear of little Consequence to many of our Readers; yet, trifling as it was, it had so violent an Effect on poor Jones, that we thought it our Duty, to relate it. In reality, there are many little Circumstances too often omitted by injudicious historians, from which Events of the utmost Importance arise. (V,v,170)

The narrator had previously differentiated his history from histories that exercised no discrimination when recording facts. He now differentiates his history from those of the "injudicious Narrators" who suffer from the inability to recognize an important minor fact. By differentiating himself from certain historians, the narrator cleverly establishes himself in the general company of historians. Of course, the narrator's suspicion that the incident will appear of little consequence to many Readers is unfounded, since the Muff's significance had already been highlighted. The narrator's suspicion is therefore perhaps ironical, depicting the narrator as having not a lot of confidence in his Reader and a nervous territorial sense towards other Histories.

The narrator's intrusion also arrests the relation of the action and invites the Reader to reconsider the importance of the event. The Muff incident leads to Tom's unmitigated certainty of his love for Sophia, but the incident itself foreshadows the narrative's plot. Sophia projects the love she feels for Tom onto the Muff. Her

attention to the Muff (or rather the Muff's interference with her father's pleasure) enrages her father. He casts the Muff into the fire, as he will later cast Tom from Sophia's presence. Sophia exhibits a definite willfulness in countering her father's action and retrieving her object of love. The narrator's intrusion draws attention to this incident by baldly claiming it deserves attention and by stopping the narrative and offering the Reader the opportunity in effect to stop and reflect. Though the incident foreshadows and motivates the plot, it also reflects, and is an element of, the artistic patterning inherent in the writing of history. An historian, by attributing cause to one event and effect to another, imposes his own conceptual pattern upon what some might argue is essentially a random grouping of historical facts.[8] At the same time as the text illustrates ever more precise historicity, the text's own artistry becomes more prominent. The text contains two competing discourses, the historical or factual and the Poetical or artistic. The factual discourse gets its authority from the extra-fictional and empirical elements, while the artistic

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[8] In Fielding's century, David Hume expressed great scepticism concerning matters of fact. He argues--"From An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding: Section X, Part I, in Eighteenth-Century English Literature, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, et al (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), p. 893--that what we regard as cause and effect is a product of our experience in seeing one event follow another. He further argues that "Tho' Experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning Matters of Fact; it must be acknowledg'd, that this Guide is not altogether infallible, but in some Cases is apt to lead us into Errors" (893).

discourse adheres to the doctrine of verisimilitude for its authority. The narrator's mediation between these two competing discourses is undertaken with a (playful) anxiety which manifests itself best in the narrator's consciousness of the medium of language in which he is working and in the artistic possibilities he recognizes in the textual surface of this medium.

The narrator's self-conscious use of conventions implicitly draws attention to the most obvious element of the textual surface: literary conventions. In order to establish the authority to tell truth through the traditions of poetry in a text that makes so many concessions to the discourse of empiricism, Fielding develops a narrator who is conscious of the shortcomings of those conventional poetic styles that had been displaced by the preferred fact-based discourses. The narrator's style of representation varies according to what is being represented and is itself a subject of the narrator's comment.

The text's Romance elements, for example, are undermined by the narrator's awareness of Romance conventions and his antipathy towards the excesses of the Romance genre. In addition to explicit attacks on the extreme examples of Romance convention, the narrator undertakes a more subtle attack on the conventions of epic poetry by praising classical learning at certain points in his text and then elsewhere burlesquing conventions of classical literature. The burlesquing of older conventions is a way of subverting the authority of older genres while at the same time appropriating their authority within a new

convention of literature. Such burlesquing may well symptomize the period of generic instability that, as McKeon argues, induced the emergence of the novel form in the early modern period.

Using the high style of classical literature to represent, for example, the low battle between Molly Seagrim and the various villagers mocks the unheroic quality of modern life (VIII,viii). The high style once used to describe truly great and heroic events is here used to describe events of trivial importance. Modern life lacks the heroic quality of classical times. Although the classical style is no longer appropriate for the representation of modern life, it is nevertheless skillfully employed by the narrator (it is he who makes the decision to use the style). In this way, the narrator, without seeming like an antiquated pedant, appropriates the authority invested in classical literature, an authority which he helps perpetuate elsewhere in the text.

Use of the mock-heroic focuses attention on the artifice of literary representation. This, along with the narrator's declamations against Romance, highlights the fictionality of those "high" characters and events of the past that necessitated the use of the high style and which lose credibility in the harsh light of empiricism. Undermining the credibility of events represented through the high style in other genres privileges the status of the narrator's own narrative. When he wants, however, to represent elements of his own narrative that require superlatives, the narrator falls apologetically back on the

heroic style. In the passage which presents Sophia Western, the narrator uses the style, through which he had previously mocked the antics of the low villagers, to represent the near ideal character of Sophia Western.[9] Sophia Western provides a special problem for the narrator whose claims to historicity and verisimilitude make it difficult to justify a character of Sophia's superlative qualities.

The narrator asserts throughout the novel that only characters that do or could exist in real life will appear in his narrative. The challenge to the narrator is to establish Sophia's credibility within the framework of a narrative built upon the declared premises of historical and verisimilar veracity. The strategy employed by the narrator is to introduce Sophia, his least credible character, in a self-consciously ironic style that is derived from literary conventions. In this way, the style is derided while Sophia's credibility is maintained. The narrator means to belittle Molly when he applies the high style to her and her antics. In its application to Sophia, the style is meant to exalt. The same reasons that make the mock-heroic style appropriate to the representation of the village battle make its use, since it is not a suitable vehicle through which to represent modern life, inappropriate for the representation of Sophia. Using a style that is appropriate for the

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[9] I might properly say the "figure" or "type" of Sophia Western, because, as R.S. Crane points out in his "The Plot of Tom Jones" and Martin Battestin in his "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom," in addition to being the flesh and blood character that loves and is loved, Sophia also symbolizes the figure of Wisdom (Prudentia) in a reading that emphasizes Tom's progress towards attaining true Prudence.

idealistic stories of classical times to introduce an idealized heroine in his true history creates some anxiety in the narrator.

To palliate this anxiety, the narrator inflates an already turgid style by using elements from other genres to heighten the effect of the style, if not the style itself, to the almost sublimely ridiculous. At the beginning of Sophia's introduction into the story, the narrator announces that he is about to announce the entrance of the heroine. He recalls the traditions of theatre in doing so, referring to the trumpets of fanfare. This foregrounds the unreality of the narrative and draws more attention to its linguistic medium. The capability of language to represent an object (such as Sophia) is called into question here in two ways--first, by reverting to other mediums such as the stage, and second, by inflating the style to extreme heights and telling the Reader that this is necessary. By raising concerns about language, the narrator deflects the Reader's attention from the ideality of Sophia to the idealizing qualities of the medium through which she is represented. In so doing, the apologetic narrator compels the Reader into accepting the validity of the near-ideal character while carrying on his program of simultaneous appropriation and subversion of epic and/or romance literature.

The application of the high style to Molly's battle derides modern life as being void of heroic value; its application to Sophia asserts the existence of a character in the modern world whose virtues, at least, achieve epic proportions. In the application of the mock-epic style to

the village brawl, the object of representation is ironized by the high style which relates it. A discrepancy exists between the high style of the epic language and the low events of the brawl that ridicules the events and the participants because they do not compare with a Ulysses or a Hector. In the application of the mock-epic style to the description of Sophia, the object of representation is not ironized because it lives up to the promise of high matter invested in high style. Nevertheless, the narrator, being an active opponent of Romance and myth, cannot help but exhibit a self-consciousness when using the high style as a mode of representation.

The narrator's awareness of the artifice involved in textual representations is suggested by the subtitle of IV,ii: "A short Hint of what we can do in the Sublime, and a Description of Miss Sophia Western" (VI,ii,116). Rather than ironizing the object of representation, the first clause of the subtitle reveals that it is the use of the high style that is here being ironized. The narrator, having cast doubts on the existence of monsters of romance and characters not culled from real life, must deflect similar aspersions from being cast upon the characters of his own narrative. The phrase "what we can do" suggests that the only power that lies in the hands of the narrator (who uses the royal "we" to imply that things are really out of his hands and up to a sort of committee of which he is only the mouth-piece) concerns decisions regarding the type of style he might employ in rendering his object. What this implies is that he has no power over the fact of Sophia's

high virtue.

The reasoning seems to be that no, perfect figures do not exist in reality and any work of literature that uses them deserves to be disparaged, although there really does exist an incredibly virtuous creature named Sophia Western who comes close to the perfect figures typical of the romance genre. By focusing the reader's attention upon matters concerning the textual construction of the character, Fielding deflects attention from the ideality of Sophia. Her ideal virtuousness presents the narrator with a problem from which he deflects attention by constructing a character through the ostentatious use of literary conventions, thereby both authenticating the character and separating the character from those same conventions.

In IV,i the narrator prepares the Reader for the introduction of Sophia Western by elaborating the uses of stagecraft as a means for ceremonious introduction. Irvin Ehrenpreis, in relating the highly ordered structure of Tom Jones to its underlying assertion of a highly ordered universe, points out the novel's relationship to drama and dramatic elements.[10] The point made by Ehrenpreis is that the juxtaposition of artificiality and naturalness in Tom Jones finds appropriate expression through the theatre metaphor:

> The constant dwelling on effects of spectacle and theatre seems an ironical consequence of

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[10] Irvin Ehrenpreis, Fielding: Tom Jones, Studies in English Literature, No. 23 (London: Edward Arnold, 1964).

> Fielding's preoccupation with deceit and candour, affectation and simplicity, because the stage devices . . . remind one endlessly that art reveals the truth through seeming, while life misleads us through artfulness. (Ehrenpreis 40)

Ehrenpreis's argument refers to the characters of Tom Jones, although it could be just as profitably applied to its language, which is itself capable of both deceitful and candid expression.

The narrator claims that "Truth" (IV,i,113) distinguishes his history from that of romances and newspapers. The narrator is anxious to establish the truth of Sophia Western because he has elsewhere proclaimed the verisimilitude of his characters. The narrator declares that despite her perfection, Sophia is no exception to the rule of verisimilitude: "how amiable soever the Picture of our Heroine will appear . . . it is really a Copy from Nature" (IV,i,116). The narrator, or rather Fielding, plays with the language through which this creature of Nature is represented. The use of language in this way conforms to Ehrenpreis's observation on Tom Jones' informing theatre metaphor. The language is not used to misrepresent Sophia, or even to represent her ironically; the language is used instead to ironize itself by drawing attention to its own theatricality. The narrator's awareness of the artificiality of the language is introduced in a reference to how stagecraft can affect an audience:

> Thus the Heroe is always introduced with a Flourish of Drums and Trumpets, in order to rouse

> a Martial Spirit in the Audience . . . [or] when Lovers are coming forth, soft Music often conducts them on the Stage . . . to sooth the Audience with the Softness of the tender Passion. (IV,i,115)

The narrator further comments on the misleading artfulness of such a strategy employed upon a different stage:

> I must question whether the Politician, who hath generally a good Nose, hath not scented out somewhat of the Utility of this Practice. I am convinced that awful Magistrate my Lord Mayor contracts a good deal of that Reverence which attends him through the Year, by the several Pageants which precede his Pomp. (IV,i,115)

A textual self-awareness is evident in this chapter. After asserting the appropriateness of preparing "the Mind of the Reader" for the introduction of Sophia Western, the narrator undermines the strategy by poking a little fun at how it is used conventionally in the theatre; he finishes by suggesting that such a practice can mislead the audience/reader from a truthful reading of the object being introduced. This exploration of the potentially misleading qualities of artifice and theatricality explains the apologetic attitude the narrator adopts in presenting Sophia in the Sublime Style.

The introduction of Sophia in IV,ii, though highly conventional, is still quite striking. This introduction continues for two paragraphs before an abrupt change in register occurs with a direct address to the reader. The effect is almost bathetic and draws attention to the

chapter's earlier stylized language. The style falls as the narrator specifies objects from the Reader's world to convey an "Idea of Sophia" (IV,ii,117). This change in style signals a shift in narrative strategy. The ancient conventions through which Sophia is first represented are replaced by a series of references to objects in the actual world. Whereas the literary conventionality (excepting the reference to Handel) of the first two paragraphs evokes a world of the mythical past, the succeeding paragraphs evoke a world that is situated in contemporary space and time. The narrator suggests that the Reader knows, in an empirical sense, not only the statues and paintings which represent the beauties of the previous generation, but also the extant "Beauties of the present Age" (IV,ii,117). Implying a critique of the ahistorical pastoral conventions, this shift in narrative strategy enacts a rejection of a style that refers to literary precedents for one that refers to the actual world. The subtitle "A short Hint of what we can do in the Sublime," and the subsequent abandonment of the style in favour of a style that better accords with the world of empirical detail reflects the self-consciousness of the narrator regarding pastoral conventions as a way to convey or help convey his verisimilar characters.

The movement of style within the description of Sophia reverses the stylistic change--from the elaborate and metaphoric to the empirical/historical--called for by many

in the age of enlightenment.[11] The description moves from an emphasis on the relation in the non-metaphoric, though still rather formal, description of the physical attributes of Sophia, to a description of hyperbolic assertions constructed with literary allusions. The narrator at first describes Sophia in prosaic terms: "middle sized . . . inclining to tall" with a "shape not only exact, but extremely delicate" (IV,ii,118). The terms used by the narrator suggest the non-metaphorical language promulgated by the Royal Society. Such language was seen as a means to reflect as clearly as possible the empirical world through the medium of language. The narrator gives this description for the edification of the Reader who has not had the fortune to know the empirically verifiable standards of beauty referred to earlier. The narrator thus tries to enlighten his Reader with a description of Sophia couched in an empirical discourse.

This type of discourse is unable, however, to convey "an adequate Idea of Sophia" (IV,ii,117). An inability to represent Sophia in strictly objective language is evinced in the narrator's inability to determine whether Sophia's chin was "large or small" (118). Perhaps the narrator here

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[11] Sprat for example-- The History of the Royal Society, in Eighteenth-Century English Literature, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), pp. 22-30--declaims against the imprecision of expression he deems implicit with metaphoric discourse: "Who can behold, without indignation, how many mists and uncertainties, these specious Tropes and Figures have brought on our Knowledg?" (27). The Society, Sprat declares, exacts from its members "a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can" (27).

is being delicate in relating Sophia's sole, slight deviation from perfect physical beauty. If this is the case, the language of equivocation ("difficult to say," "perhaps") keeps the notion of subjectivity, which is an implicit criticism of the empirical discourse, in the foreground. Moreover, keeping in mind that the narrator elsewhere asserts his role as creator, the importance of this equivocation lies in the posture of the narrator. He maintains the role of historian. He cleverly illustrates how difficult it is to describe the physical features of his heroine by mimicking the difficulty that the empirical scientist faces in describing any phenomenon. The reference to a possible deviation from physical perfection occurs within the empirical discourse not surprisingly because it is the empirical discourse that can least admit (and least express) perfection. The empirical discourse, in the description of Sophia, is gradually supplanted by a literary one. Once the narrator starts using the metaphoric mode, there are no further hints of imperfection. The narrator falls upon hyperbolic, literary allusions to describe Sophia's teeth, the colour of her blush, and the purity of her skin. The movement from the empirical eyewitness description of Sophia to a description that relies more on the emotive qualities of literary allusions suggests the narrator's lack of confidence in the ability of the empirical discourse to convey the idea of Sophia. This suggests a privileging of the truth derived from or conveyed through poetry/literature over that conveyed through an empirical discourse. Ultimately, the change privileges,

despite the great number of historicizing elements in the narrative, the artist's creativity over the historian's actuality.

Beyond the Facts

Although the narrator mediates the historical and verisimilar discourses of Tom Jones under the guise of an historian, his artistic impulses draw him to discuss and practice the artistry implicit in any collection of historical facts. The narrator undermines his role of historian not only by referring to the artistic power he holds over the manner in which he can choose to represent facts, but also by referring, less frequently, to his power as an imaginative source of the facts themselves. Under the narrator's mediation, the verisimilar discourse prevails over the historical. The privileging of the verisimilar discourse allows Fielding to posit a fictional world in which an adherence to historical veracity is maintained at the same time as a divine order is seen still to function.

Although Fielding's Tom Jones and John Milton's Paradise Lost have some revealing similarities,[12] the

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[12] Bruce Stovel--"Tom Jones and the Odyssey," in Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 1, No. 4 (July 1989), 263-264--briefly refers to the allusions in Tom Jones to Paradise Lost, which "give to the novel's action much of its epic, if hardly solemn, universality. Allworthy's estate is called Paradise Hall and when Tom is expelled from it Fielding comments, 'The World, as Milton phrases it, lay all before him; and Jones, no more than Adam, had any Man to whom he might resort for Comfort or Assistance' (VII,2,331)--and thereby hints that Tom is also like Adam in having Providence as a guide." Stovel also refers to Martin C. Battestin's brief use of the same quote in Battestin, p. 181.

differences in their fictional worlds show that, over time, the creative writer's focus shifted from constructing highly imaginary worlds to ones more representative of actual reality. Neither Tom Jones nor Paradise Lost, of course, is representative of the age in which it was produced. Milton's highly imaginative depiction of the celestial events leading to the fall of man might have seemed anachronistic when first published, but it represents possibly the crowning achievement of a literary tradition in which the divine realm of Christian religion could be portrayed. Fielding's fiction, though not standing here for the literature of the entire eighteenth century, nevertheless illustrates a concern with actual reality which manifests itself (along with a similar concern by Richardson) a century later in the sub-genre of literary realism.

In Paradise Lost Milton depicts a 'real' paradise, while the "Paradise Hall" from which Tom is cast belongs to the fallen world. And whereas Milton's God talks, walks, and wages war in Paradise Lost, the presence of Fielding's God is made implicit only through such intangibles as the providential resolution of the plot. Adam undergoes a spiritual improvement. The improvement in Tom concerns his wealth and rank as much as the spiritual "Prudentia" Martin Battestin remarks Tom has had to acquire through his experience (179). In Paradise Lost, though mankind's physical environment worsens, its spiritual lot improves through the possibility of admittance to heaven after life on earth. In Tom Jones, although the spiritual state of

mankind undergoes no change, a society results from the plot's resolution that better emulates the divine order.

Another revealing difference between Milton's poem and Fielding's novel is in the vast breadth of the subject each work undertakes to cover. In Paradise Lost, the narrator determines to "assert eternal Providence / And justify the ways of God to men."[13] In Tom Jones, the narrator makes no mention of divine Providence in declaring that his history will cover the subject of "Human Nature" (I,i,26). The declared subject matter of each work reveals how the range of possibilities in constructing a fictional world had been reduced from the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth. Thomas Pavel argues in Fictional Worlds that for any given society there exists a relationship between the actual world and fictional worlds that varies depending upon that society's prevailing conception of reality.[14] As a society's conception of reality changes, so does its acceptance of fictional alternatives to the actual world:

> The actual world [and] the relation of accessibility [to possible, fictional alternatives] are different for the authors of medieval miracle plays compared to the author of a modern mystery novel. A world in which the statue

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[13] John Milton, John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Hughes (New York: Macmillan, 1957) I,1.26.

[14] Thomas G. Pavel, Fictional Worlds (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986).

> of the Virgin Mary speaks to a layman belongs to the range of [possible worlds] for a medieval writer and his public, just as a world in which an FBI narcotics squad dismantles a network of drug dealers . . . [belongs to the range of possible worlds] for the writer of a contemporary mystery novel and its readers. (Pavel 47)

The "relation of accessibility" Pavel refers to is the degree to which literary realism impacts the relationship between the "actual world and the truth of literary texts" (Pavel 46). Rather than a set of literary conventions, Pavel argues, realism can be seen as an attitude (on the part of both readers and writers) towards the ability of the texts to, and the methods by which they can, reflect the actual world. The attitudes had changed during the time between Milton's life and Fielding's, just as the attitudes towards the possibilities of what can be acceptably portrayed in literary texts have changed between medieval times and the present. In an age in which religious faith was still strong, Milton could construct an acceptable fictional world which includes angels, devils, mythical humans, historical humans, and an omnipotent God. By Fielding's time, God the Father as a portrayable entity had fallen out of literary fashion. The empiricist project of studying nature, along with the Deistic project of discovering God in (and constituting) His creation, reduced the acceptability of miracles, divine interventions and other such contrivances in fictional worlds.

The narrator of Tom Jones dedicates one of his

prefatory chapters (VIII,i) to delineating the range of possibilities that he feels are allowable in the construction of fictional worlds. In Pavel's theory, the narrator's assertions concerning this range of possible worlds for his new Province of Writing would reflect an already acceptable range of possibilities. The vigour with which the narrator carves out his new Province, however, suggests an animosity toward possibilities that were still expressed in fiction during the 1740's. Ira Konigsberg in Narrative Techniques in the English Novel argues that the type of realism offered by Fielding is meant as an antidote to the type of realism Richardson serves up in Pamela:

> Fielding's point is that realistic techniques of narration cannot substitute for the truth about human nature. In Fielding's eyes, Richardson presents an illusion of reality--but not reality itself, not the way people act and think. True realism exposes human nature as we all know it.[15]

Fielding's reaction to Richardson expresses McKeon's dialectic theory of the novel, in which each work is a reaction against, and incorporation of, previous works. Fielding's reaction against Richardson's naively empirical realism can be gauged, as Konigsberg shows, by noting how passages from Shamela ridicule "Richardson's use of common details to create an air of probability and authenticity"

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[15] Ira Konigsberg, Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen (n.p.:Archon Books, 1985) p. 103.

(102).[16]

The narrator of Tom Jones, in introducing his discussion of "that Species of Writing which is called the Marvellous" (VIII,i,301), delineates the opposing attitudes regarding what is possible in a literary representation:

> while some are . . . ready to allow, that the same Thing which is impossible may be yet probable, others have so little Historic or Poetic Faith that they believe nothing to be either possible or probable, the like to which hath not occurred to their own Observation. (VIII,i,302)

The first position refers to Aristotle's assertion that "a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible" (Aristotle 59). In other words, a fictional context can make an event that is impossible in the actual world become probable in the fictional world. The second position prohibits the use of writers' inventions in fictional worlds by asserting that only that which has been observed in the actual world should be allowed in the fictional world. The first position, then, allows almost free reign to the writer's imagination while the second position allows the writer's imagination almost no reign at all.

The narrator begins to situate his own beliefs between the two definitive positions when he asserts (his first

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[16] Konigsberg quotes this passage: "Mrs. Jewkes went in with me, and helped me to pack up my little all, which was soon done; being no more than two day-caps, two night-caps, five shifts,one sham, a hoop, a quilted petticoat. . . ." (Fielding, Shamela 327).

rule) that every writer must keep "within the Bounds of Possibility [because] what it is not possible for Man to perform, it is scarce possible for man to believe he did perform" (VIII,i,302). He argues that classical representations of prodigies and miracles were accepted because the "Poet himself wrote to Heathens, to whom poetical Fables were Articles of Faith" (VIII,i,302). The narrator's argument suggests that the more credulous reader lived in an earlier world in which divine intervention was not considered fantastic. This argument recalls Pavel's idea of the changing attitudes towards the range of possibilities allowed in a fictional representation. Depicting the credulous reader as a member of a naive past implies that the modern (eighteenth-century) reader is less credulous; the eighteenth-century reader's more sophisticated conception of the world does not admit those miracles previously held true. Although the narrator implies that the credulousness of the ancient reader is due to his superstitious faith in the Heathen Deities, miracles of the Christian faith are not alluded to. This in turn suggests that although the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of the actual world is great, there is also a considerable distance between the reader faced by Fielding and the reader of the seventeenth century. When the narrator declares (as a predicate in an argument against Christian writers' use of Heathen Deities) that a writer "cannot introduce into his Works any of that heavenly Host which make a Part of his Creed" (VIII,i,303), he (perhaps inadvertently) points out how the range of acceptable

fictional possibilities had changed for a society that a century earlier had produced a Paradise Lost.

The rejection of Heathen Theology and the heavenly Host as fit subjects for a writer reveals the narrator's belief that the writer's imagination must be constrained in the creation of a fictional world by what is possible in the actual world. His allowance that Ghosts be the only "supernatural Agents which can be allowed to [the] Moderns" (VIII,i,303) reveals, if not a commonly held belief in these beings in Fielding's time, the narrator's belief that the writer's imagination should not be held only to verifiable observations within the actual world. Not surprisingly, then, the narrator has charted a course between the two extremes he originally used to define the range of possibilities in the construction of a fictional world. After the narrator proclaims (in his second rule) that the writer must stay "within the Rules of Probability" (VIII,i,304), he asserts the priority of the Historian who will never err so long as he "will confine himself to what really happened" (VIII,i,304). Although the narrator disparagingly mentions that to offend this rule means to fall "into Fiction" (VIII,i,304) and become "a writer of Romance" (VIII,i,305), he mentions that Historians of private life must remain within the limit of probability and possibility because to substantiate their work they "have no publick Notoriety, no concurrent Testimony, no Records to support and corroborate" (VIII,i,305). These are rules by which a writer might validate or authenticate, in addition to a history, a work of fiction; and they are laid out,

interestingly enough, at the same time that the narrator denounces the fictionalization of history. Following the third and last rule, which stipulates that human actions must be "likely for the very Actors and Characters themselves to have performed" (VIII,i,307), the narrator sums up his position concerning the relationship between the actual world and its textual representation:

> Within these few Restrictions, I think, every Writer may be permitted to deal as much in the Wonderful as he pleases; nay, if he thus keeps within the Rules of Credibility, the more he can surprise the Reader, the more he will engage his Attention, and the more he will charm him. As a Genius of the highest Rank observes in his 5th Chapter of the Bathos, 'The great Art of all Poetry is to mix Truth with Fiction; in order to join the Credible with the Surprizing.'
> (VIII,i,308)

The narrator, who had originally intended to set rules for historians, here addresses a wider range of writers. Before this summation, the narrator pointedly warned historians against "falling into Fiction." Directing his comments to private-life historians was the first step towards endorsing an element of creativity because by following the historian's rules of possibility and probability, a writer can attain credibility in his fiction. The narrator's final rule seems directed more towards a fiction writer than an historian. Earlier the narrator states that the historian should stick to what has actually happened. The final rule

seems to rescind the earlier comment because it is entirely possible in the actual world that an individual will act out of character; and since "Characters," "Actors" and "dramatic Critics" are referred to, the rule seems directed towards those writers creating characters for a fictional world. The summation, with the quote from Peri Bathous, illustrates the narrator's ultimate endorsement of the use of fictional elements in a textual representation of the actual world.[17]

The narrator, then, specifies a well delineated relationship between the actual world and the fictional. By following the three rules laid out by the narrator, a writer can create a world, whether representative of history or of an imaginative construct, that will represent the type of reality Fielding thought appropriate to convey. The various comments with which the narrator elaborates the rules reveal how, in Fielding's time, the actual world's conception was grounded in empiricist ideology. The prefatory chapter to Book VIII, though addressed to the writer, illustrates the concern that the narrator has about his work's acceptance by the reading public. He declares that by following his rules the writer is "intitled to some Faith from his Reader" (VIII,i,308). As has been mentioned, the reader to whom Fielding implicitly appeals in this passage has a different conceptualization of the actual world, and hence a different

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[17] Peri Bathous ironically praises the lowness of contemporary eighteenth-century literature. The irony of choosing Peri Bathous from which to quote reflects Fielding's accordance with Pope's disdainful opinion of (much of) contemporary literature and thereby accords Fielding's text the same judgemental authority as Pope's.

attitude toward what is permissible in the fictional world, than did the reader whom Milton faced. The various dei ex machina that the narrator says were at one time possible for the writer to employ had become no longer acceptable to the reader and therefore a writer could feel no longer comfortable using them.

The narrator's strenuous efforts to delineate what is permissible in his new Province of Writing reveal the lack of authority a writer must have felt when asserting a fictional world in the age of empiricism. Although Thomas Pavel in Fictional Worlds does not historicize the relationship between actual and what he calls salient worlds, the leap (from the actual to the fictional) seems to be far greater in earlier fictional texts that represent a sacred-profane duality (Pavel's term). He finds, for example, that the universe described in Beckett's Molloy "appears to be made up of a single ontological layer" (Pavel 62), by which he means that Beckett's fictional world depicts only, and suggests nothing beyond, the profane realm. A greater ontological complexity appears in "Greek Tragedies," "medieval passion plays," "Renaissance dramas" and "many contemporary poems" (63), works which depict (and privilege) a sacred reality governing over a profane one. A similar though less severe simplification in the ontologies of fictional universes takes place in the time that passed between the productions of Paradise Lost and Tom Jones. The epistemological shifts, which McKeon notes were taking place before and during Fielding's time and had induced the formation of the novel genre, inhibit the acceptability of a

fictional world of stratified ontologies in which Heaven, Paradise, the fallen world, and Hell are all textually represented. The range of possibilities open to a writer is limited to the relatively profane fictional world as represented in Tom Jones.

Although the possibility of representing the sacred-profane duality was no longer as available to Fielding, he was nevertheless able to represent the idea of a divine order operating within the fictional context of a profane world. While the historicizing elements of Tom Jones create the illusion of historical reality and thereby reduce the gap between the actual world and its textual representation, the rules of probability and possibility set out in VIII,i permit Fielding the artistic license with which to make the corrupt world ultimately adhere to a higher and divine truth. Although by the narrator's rules (and the pressures of his own time) Fielding is restricted to depicting the profane world, he is able to convey the same messages conveyed through those texts which can unself-consciously represent a sacred-profane duality.

In the context of a representation limited to a single ontological possibility, Fielding's narrator portrays a morally corrupt world in which the social order has been inverted and most individuals are motivated by greed and pride; but through this portrayal Fielding can ultimately illustrate the existence of a divine and benevolent Providence. The fundamental moral framework of the novel, which can be viewed simply as a struggle between good and evil, is elaborated by the deceptive appearance of Tom and

Blifil. Like a true Machiavellian, Blifil fashions for himself the facade of the good man. Tom, through his own actions and the misrepresentations of Blifil, appears as the bad man. The resolution of the narrative's plot reveals each character's true identity. In the same manner, the plot's resolution reveals the ostensibly corrupt world as ultimately well-ordered and under the rule of a divine Providence. The discrepancy between appearance and reality which informs the characters can be seen in the text's depiction of the world. In an evil act, Blifil appears to do good when he sets free Sophia's captive bird. Tom appears to be doing evil when he lies to Allworthy to protect the livelihood of Black George. The ultimate order in the fictional world of Tom Jones is obscured by the illusory appearances that Fielding unblinkingly represents as a fundamental characteristic of empirical reality.

The ostensible chaos of the fictional world is often conveyed through the depictions of a breakdown in the social hierarchy. The social disorder is suggested, for example, by the text's depiction of judicial power. When Mrs. Western desires "her Brother to execute Justiceship" (VII,ix,272) on Mrs. Honour, the application of the law is shown to be an arbitrary affair that favours the privileged classes. After having her request turned down, Mrs. Western hotly informs her brother that "she had known Servants very severely punished for affronting their Master" (272) and that she knows a Justice in London who "would commit a Servant to Bridewell, at any time when a Master or Mistress desired it" (272). Squire Western, of course, has turned

down her request not so much in the interests of justice as from his own fear of having a third Information "exhibited against him in the King's-Bench" (272). The text abounds with examples of the lack of disinterestedness at play in the judicial system. The rule seems to be that the ignorance, incompetence, or maliciousness of the system's functionaries causes more injustice than it cures. The most interesting part of this particular depiction is how an ignorance of the law makes the Squire dependent upon his Clerk. If knowledge is power, then the power of the judicial system lies not in the hands of the Justice but in those of the Clerk. The Justice's love of hunting causes him to treat "Cases relating to the Game" as "Matters of high Importance" (272). In dealing with offenses of not "quite so high a Nature" (272), and of which he is ignorant, the Justice pays "some Attention to the Advice of his Clerk" (272). The Justice's reliance on the Clerk suggests a world in which the social order has become inverted: rule does not descend from above; it ascends from below.

The societal breakdown, here portrayed in the relationship between the Justice and his Clerk, is also observed in the relationship between Critics and Artists. The narrator laments the ascendent position that Critics have attained over the Artists on whose work they comment:

> the Critics have been emboldened to assume a Dictatorial Power, and have so far succeeded, that they are now become the Masters, and have the Assurance to give laws to those Authors, from whose Predecessors they originally received them.

(V,i,159)

The connection between the realm of art, in which the narrator is here engaged, and the world of the narrative comes from the narrator's elaboration of this analogy:

> The Critic, rightly considered, is no more than the Clerk, whose Office it is to transcribe the Rules and Laws laid down by the Judges. . . . But in Process of Time, and in Ages of Ignorance, the Clerk began to invade the Power, and assume the Dignity of his master. . . . The Clerk became the Legislator, and those very peremptorily gave Laws, whose Business it was, at first, only to transcribe them. (V,i,159)

The Clerk, who here parallels the Critic, appears also in the narrative, an appearance suggesting that the misrule portrayed in the narrative has its parallel in the narrator's world. This passage evokes a picture of an Artist struggling against the impositions of the Critics. The Critics, like the Clerks in the earlier passage, have usurped the authority of their Masters. The narrator mentions Time and Ignorance as the "two great Supporters of Imposture" (159), suggesting the narrator's awareness of those momentous changes of the eighteenth century noted by McKeon. The changing epistemology forces the narrator to invent a new Province of Writing that, although restricted to representing the profane, realistically portrays the chaos of the actual world while illustrating an underlying

divine order.[18] The social instability of the changing social order in the actual world manifests itself in the text's portrayal of hierarchical inversion.

Although Fielding perhaps accepts social change as inevitable, such changes and disruptions are contained within the text by tacitly asserting a higher level of order and stability in the resolution of the plot. When the narrator disparages the Critics in V,i he asserts his right to invent a new form of writing. In this chapter the narrator, without holding himself "strictly bound to assign any Reason" (V,i,158),[19] determines that the inclusion of the "initial Essays prefixed to the historical Matter contained in every Book" (158) be laid down as a "Rule necessary to be observed in all prosai-comi-epic Writing" (158). By setting himself at the head of "this Kind of Writing" (158), the narrator claims the right to define arbitrarily the rules that will establish the venture in which he is engaged. The prefatory essays not only offer the narrator a platform from which to propound his literary

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[18] Note the single ontological slice pertains doubly: first, to the narrator's history in relation to the narrator, and second, to the world of the narrator, which is a fictional world representing an artist-historian's narration and self-reflective commentary. Both these worlds are single ontological layers in which the presence of the sacred is, if at all there, suppressed. Taken together, however, these two worlds, that of narrative and that of narrator, constitute a modified form of the profane-sacred duality, as I will argue later in this chapter.

[19] The narrator, a page later (160), relinquishes his right to lay down a Rule <u>ipse dixit</u>, because the Critics are guilty of doing just that. What counts here is that the narrator establishes his right before relinquishing it.

venture, but also create the forum, or world, in which the narrator (as a mouthpiece for Fielding) can engage his literary concerns in reference to the actual world. The power of the Critic does not affect the events of the narrative; it affects only how the narrative is likely to be received. The narrator attacks the Critics ad hominem as a way of solidifying his claim to be the sole arbiter of his new Province of Writing and of re-establishing the hierarchical order in which the Artist is privileged over the Critic. Fielding may or may not be concerned over the actual power of the Critics. Setting them up as exemplars of a larger social illness and then having his narrator re-assert the ascendent position of the artist, however, expresses the social concerns of Fielding (and his narrator). The Critics, then, function as signals of a social illness that in the course of the prefatory essay the narrator cures.

A similar pattern can be seen in the "historical" part of the text. The Clerk's knowledge and the Justice's ignorance of the law also signal a social illness. According to his own strictures, the narrator cannot directly intervene in the fictional world of the narrative and arbitrarily correct the social order. By the end of the narrative, Squire Western is still a Justice and just as ignorant. Contrary to events in the essay world, the illness of social misrule in the narrative is not cured. Although this failure might be an example of the critique of "Aristocratic ideology" that McKeon terms "progressive ideology," it is more likely an example of what he calls

"conservative ideology," which is analogous to the stance of "extreme scepticism." The ignorance Western evinces in his Judicial office is an indicting depiction of received, or aristocratic, authority. The aristocracy had traditionally been empowered by its analogous relationship with the divine chain of being: Divine authority filters to the common human through the aristocracy; and the aristocracy is to the commoner what the divine power is to human kind. Progressive ideology, which stipulates that one's ability should determine one's social status, undermines the profane-divine commoner-aristocrat analogy. Fielding's narrative, however, shows that in spite of the persistence of a corrupt ruling class's social misrule the ordering hand of Providence inheres. Had the Clerk not intervened to negate the ignorance of the Squire, the escape of Sophia and Mrs. Honour and the wild set of events leading to the providential outcome would have been prevented. The very elements of misrule in Tom Jones are thus fundamental to the Providence that ultimately informs the fictional world, and are instrumental in the resolution of the plot.

At the plot's conclusion there are indications that, although there still persists in the world a great deal of chaos and malevolence, a change in the world has been wrought for the better. The continued intrigue of Blifil, who is poised to enter the world of politics and marry into wealth, casts a slight, flickering shadow into the world illuminated by the marriage of Tom and Sophia. In addition to the felicitous outcome of the plot, which owes more to the protagonists' passive faith in an intervening Providence

than to their own enterprise and fortitude, certain aberrations in the social order become rectified. If it follows that a happy and loving family suggests a measure of social stability, then the marriage of Tom and Sophia represents a return to social stability.

Many critics, such as Battestin in "Tom Jones: The Argument of Design" and Robert Alter in Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, have argued that the elaborately structured plot reflects Fielding's belief in an ultimately well-ordered universe. David Goldknopf, who dissents from this view, argues that "Fielding's neo-classical taste for parallelism is [so] much in evidence in Tom Jones" that some instances convey a "redundancy [which] is almost unnatural."[20] In particular, Goldknopf picks out the parallel between the families of Allworthy and Western. One of Fielding's intentions behind both families lacking a mother, for example, is to focus attention away from family life onto the "squirarchical social structure" (794) and thereby "purify [its] socio-political function" (795). Goldknopf does not believe Fielding intends what he (Goldknopf) thinks is effected here: a "moral critique of the squirarchical order" (796). Fielding does not radically criticize the social status quo, but the novel's structure suggests that although Fielding may have been conservative in regard to the social hierarchy, he was more than willing to criticize the injustices within that hierarchy.

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[20] David Goldknopf, "The Failure of Plot in Tom Jones," in Tom Jones, ed. Sheridan Baker (New York: Norton, 1973) p. 794.

The marriage of Tom and Sophia as an emblem and source of happiness is paralleled earlier in the novel by the marriage of Nightingale and Nancy. These parallel weddings suggest a movement away from the incomplete and chaotic family units represented in the early books towards a happier, more stable social norm. Interestingly, Goldknopf suggests that the inclusion of a shadow-mother in each squire's family is meant to emphasize a "non-uxorial condition" (794). The relationship between Squire Western and his sister, however, especially exemplifies the domestic discord that prevails in the early representations of husband-wife relationships (such as that of Bridget and Captain Blifil). The movement from discord to harmony that is played out at the level of individual relationships reflects a similar movement in the society at large. The domestic discord in both Squires' families impels the plot, which at its most fundamental is, to quote Goldknopf, "boy meets--loses--gets girl" (802). A lack of frank communication between Allworthy and his sister initiates, and the malevolence of Blifil perpetuates, the misperception of an insurmountable social difference between Sophia and Tom. In the Western family, the battles between brother and sister enable and motivate Sophia to strike out after Tom. Congruent with the plot's movement is the movement in the portrayal of the fictional society to a more stable state. The early familial discord functions not only as an impediment to the marriage of the two protagonists, but also as a reflection of a society that needs the harmony and benevolence that the marriages toward the end of the plot

provide:

> And such is their Condescendence, their Indulgence, and their Beneficence to those below them, that there is not a Neighbour, a Tenant or a Servant who doth not most gratefully bless the Day when Mr. Jones was married to his Sophia. (761)

The text's ultimate portrayal of the social order within the fictional world contrasts with the portrayals in the earlier books, in which neighbours cast an unflattering light upon the benevolent actions of Allworthy and in which servants continually express dissatisfaction with their station in life. Of course, the marriage is not a cure-all for society. At the novel's end discord persists, for example, in the duplicity of Square and the remorse of Mr. Nightingale over the penniless state of his son's bride. The portrayal of the world, which shows a slight improvement as a result of the plot's resolution, only hints at the omnipresence of a benign deity.

Battestin calls the ending of Tom Jones a "comic apocalypse: that last, improbable, joyous catastrophe in which true identities are discovered, the innocent redeemed, an unerring justice meted out to one and all" (161). Fielding, Battestin argues, could get away with such an ending in a text that objected to the doctrine of virtue rewarded and vice punished on the grounds "That it is not true" (XV,i,600). Unlike Richardson, "whose eye was on the fact, Fielding's [was] on the abstraction which the fact implies" (161). Without an explication of the profane-sacred duality, the movement and outcome of the plot makes

the presence of the sacred within the profane felt. Battestin asserts that,

> Tom Jones asks to be taken as a work of Art, as paradigm and emblem of that wise Design which Pope celebrated, and in terms of which, 'partial Evil', however real, however terrible, may be seen as 'universal Good.' (161)

This is certainly true. Without Blifil's willful malevolence, Tom would not attain the heights of felicity he ultimately enjoys. The claim that Fielding's intention was to create a world mimetic of divine order, rather than a factual account of the actual world, is probably true as well, though this claim overlooks the impact that facts have on the narrative.

Unlike the other works, such as Pope's Essay on Man, that Battestin asserts as models of Augustan literature, Fielding's Tom Jones is full of references to generic traditions. Both works posit the notion that within a seemingly chaotic existence there exists an order in which everything has its reason and its place. But whereas Pope's work, though seamlessly incorporating the new science, is untroubled by the subjectivism taught by Locke and views nature as an objective phenomenon, the conflicting discourses in Tom Jones suggest the pressures against simply re-articulating the same old theme of concordia discors. The historical discourse, which heeds the empirical program of not speculating beyond the mere facts, cannot and does not go unacknowledged by Fielding. Pope argues in the Essay on Man that the divine order lies beyond man's ability to

perceive. The empirical discourse, meanwhile, implies that nothing but speculation lies beyond what we can perceive. Fielding has this discourse very much in mind as he conveys to the Reader, through an ostensibly historical document rife with tokens of empiricism, his own conception of divine order.

Fielding is not content merely to symbolize the divine order with a fictional world that purports, through its appropriation of the historicist discourse, to represent the actual world. Fielding's concern regarding the Reader of the text is that he or she learn to look beyond the innumerable facts that saturate newspapers and banal histories. Fielding comments on the limited conception of the world offered by the doctrine of empiricism, by associating the banal histories and newspapers with the limited vision of the non-benevolent reader who cannot see through the wall of facts to the informing order that lies beyond them. As Brian McCrea notes, the narrator's condemnation of newspapers reflects an anxious territorial imperative in the construction of his new Province of Writing. Through an analysis of style, McCrea shows "how Fielding's true history integrates two other modes--the romance and the newspaper--and how it defines the techniques and functions of his style" (McCrea 472). More than merely subsuming the mode of newspapers into a dialectic of style, however, the narrator's disparagement of the newspaper reflects a concern over its role in causing the well-ordered universe to be misperceived as chaotic. When the narrator comments that a newspaper will have "just the same Number of

Words, whether there be any News in it or not" (II,i,58), he seems to disparage not only modern taste for the trivia of newspapers, but also the inability of some writers to discern matters of import, since they apply the same thought and attention to the trivial as to the significant. This point is elaborated later in the text when the narrator argues that although the good Author will observe the rule of probability, he need not feel restricted to characters and incidents "trite, common, or vulgar; such as happen in every Street, or in every House, or which may be met with in the home Articles of a News-Paper" (VIII,i,308). Although newspapers are capable of representing the events of the phenomenal realm, they are portrayed as unable to provide a glimpse beyond the "trite, common, or vulgar." This exhortation to the Author to exercise a little discernment in the selection of historical material urges the discovery of patterns and meaning beyond the immediately discernible.

The narrator's complaints against the newspapers resemble a similar concern he has that the Reader may be unable to discern the larger picture of a well-ordered universe beyond the trite, vulgar, or common. Critics have lately identified a number of roles the Reader, or the reader, enacts in reading Tom Jones. Their views, departing from Wayne C. Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction which finds no relationship between the story of Tom and the relationship that develops between narrator and the Reader, generally argue that the narrator's intrusions make up an integral part of Tom Jones. John Preston in The Created Self argues that Tom Jones offers a number of "successive responses" to

the reader who ultimately realizes that he or she, like the characters, must learn to judge with sympathy in order to separate herself from the 'bad' reader.[21] Wolfgang Iser, in The Implied Reader, similarly suggests that reading Tom Jones induces "a process of learning in the course of which one's own sense of judgment may come under scrutiny."[22] James J. Lynch, in "Moral Sense and the Narrator of Tom Jones," argues that "Fielding's narrator sets up a debate between good-natured and ill-natured readers that teaches us how to respond with sensibility to the events in the novel."[23] More, however, than merely training the reader's critical faculties or inculcating the reader with a benevolent disposition towards Tom's gritty reality, the narrator strives to enable the reader to envision the divine reality within the messy, everyday reality in which he lives.

When the narrator says it is his "Business to relate Facts as they are" (VII,xii,287), he draws attention to the phenomenal materials with which he must build a narrative. His desire for the reader to participate in the story is indicated immediately after, when he exhorts the reader to

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[21] John Preston, The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (London: Heinemann, 1970) p114.

[22] Wolfgang Iser, "The Role of the Reader in Fielding's Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones," in The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974), p. 31.

[23] James J. Lynch, "Moral Sense and the Narrator of Tom Jones," SEL, 25 (1985), p. 600.

"consult that original Book of Nature" (VII,xii,287) to verify the veracity of the history's facts. This exhortation urges the reader beyond the bare facts to the text's informing doctrine of probability and possibility. The narrator's desire for the Reader to become aware of a worldview greater than the aggregate sum of the facts related in the history is further suggested by the narrator's critical comments regarding reading and perception.

The narrator denounces newspapers because they direct the reader's attention to the wall of facts and not beyond. The narrator similarly condemns a reading strategy that lacks an informing perspective and that cannot get the reader beyond the words on the page (or, in the case of a character, the facts in the world). The narrator most vigorously condemns the Critics for such a reading strategy, calling them "Men of shallow Capacities, [who] very easily [mistake] mere Form for Substance" (V,i,159). This type of reader is contrasted with "the Man of Candour, [who] is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an Imperfection, or even a Vice, without Rage against the guilty Party" (VII,i,249). Such a 'reader' reserves judgement until he possesses a total picture, because he is aware that a "single bad act no more constitutes a Villain in Life, than a single bad Part on the Stage" (VII,i,249). In X,i the narrator warns the Critic not to "condemn any of the Incidents in this our History, as impertinent and foreign to our main Design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what Manner such Incident may conduce to that Design"

(X,i,398). The narrator's admonitions to his readers, of whom the Critics are but an extreme example, can similarly be made to the characters within the story.

None of the characters of course possess an ability to see the greater design while they are living amongst the details, but those characters who are good-natured enjoy an informing worldview that grants them a little distance between themselves and their situation in a confusing world. Although Allworthy, for example, badly mis-reads Blifil, it is not so much in surprise as in joyous confirmation that he exclaims, "Good Heavens! Well! the Lord disposeth all Things" (XVIII,vii,729) when previously hidden circumstances become fortuitously discovered. The narrator himself articulates this sentiment before narrating Allworthy's discovery of the five hundred pound note, which he had given to Tom, in the hands of Black George:

> Here an accident happened of a very extraordinary Kind; one indeed of those strange Chances, whence very good and grave Men have concluded that Providence often interposes in the Discovery of the most secret Villainy. (XVIII,iii,712)

Notice that the narrator maintains his mien of disinterestedness in regard to the doctrine of Providence by attributing the derivative conclusion to others. Although imperfect, the informing view of the good-natured characters empowers them with an almost naive reliance on a beneficent Providence from which they are in turn affected with a benevolent outlook on life. The ability they show to look beyond the earthly realm is illustrated in part by

Allworthy's belief that his late beloved Wife is "only gone a little before him [on a] Journey which he should most certainly, sooner or later, take after her; and that he had not the least Doubt of meeting her again, in a Place where he should never part with her more" (I,ii,27). The neighbours who in regard to these sentiments disparage Allworthy's "Sense," "Religion," and "Sincerity" illustrate the reader who remains uninformed of any perspective grander than what his or her fallible senses afford.

John Preston notes in "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgement'" that the narrator's effort at teaching the reader to judge properly the actions of the narrative is mirrored in the narrative by Tom's learning the same ability through his experiences. The didactic purpose of the book, since it functions at the fictional and the extra-fictional levels, seems to suggest an analogy between the narrator's design and God's design. The reader is urged by the narrator to suspend passing judgement on his narrative until its final design becomes clear. By chastising readers and Critics who get so caught up in the parts of the text that they miss its greater meaning, the narrator teaches a strategy of reading that can be used by the reader to better understand his own world. The reader who is taught to seek the larger design in an author's work can then seek the larger design in the actual world.

The single ontological level that comprises the fictional world of the narrative is overseen by the invisible world of the narrator. The collective text of Tom Jones, then, exhibits a certain ontological duality that can

be compared with the profane-sacred duality that comfortably informed earlier fictional discourses. The analogy between the narrator and the Deity in relation to their respective works has been previously remarked by Martin Battestin in "Tom Jones: The Argument of Design," where he writes that the narrative manipulations "remind us of the Deity" (162). The narrator himself implies the analogy when, despite his profession to relate "Facts as they are", he often refers to the history as his own creation. Carrying this analogy further, the narrator's reluctance to intervene in the events of the narrative (or creation) as did writers (and deities) of old suggests again the pressures of the empirical context into which Fielding was writing. A busy, manipulative God performing miracles on demand had fallen out of fashion amongst a society whose religious faith had become modified by empiricist ideology, so Fielding could hardly be expected to supply such an unfashionable narrator for his reading public. The relationship between the narrator and his creation mirrors how much of eighteenth-century England viewed the relationship between God and his creation.

The narrator's ironically oblique references to the Christian faith allow the point of divine order to be made through the structure of the narrative and the dialogue of the characters. In this way, the narrator, untainted by any didactic agenda, remains firmly entrenched in the discourse of empiricism. The realm of the Deity, of the sacred, is subsumed into the extra-fictional fictional world in which the narrator, posing sometimes as an artist and sometimes as

an historian, is situated. By endowing his narrator with the same ontological status given to the historical figures who appear in the fictional world, Fielding deflects any suggestion that the narrator and the world he inhabits function as sacred proxies. Maintaining the historicist illusion at the level of the narrator permits a relaxation in the historicist illusion at the level of the narrative. The ultimate status of the narrative as a work of art analogizes the art of man with the art of God. The characters in the narrative react to the manipulations of the narrator (author) in the same way that the reader reacts to the actual world. Although the narrator is aware of the characters, they are not aware of the narrator. The same, if the analogy holds, must hold for the reader in relation to the Author of the creation. Ultimately, the fictional world created by the text of Tom Jones is a modification of the old sacred-profane duality. The sacred world is re-articulated as the world of the narrator. The narrator's concern with the facts of history emphasizes the eminence in which contemporary society held the profane world. The sacred world was still important for Fielding, however, and he used the historicist discourse to construct a fictional world which while ostensibly representing only the profane world, and for the most part offering an ironic representation of belief in the sacred world, actually represents the workings of a divine Providence and a benevolent Deity.

Conclusion

The discourse of History in Tom Jones with its assertions to represent actual events keeps the attention of the Reader focused upon the supposedly causal events that, strung together, constitute the narrative's plot. At the same time that the narrator pretends to record historical truth he foregrounds the artistry implicit in all historical recording. He reveals at various times throughout the text his own artistic input not only in explicating his decisions over which style to use in the representation of historical truth, but also in his insinuations that the characters and events of the true History are under his creative control. In establishing the rules that are to govern what he calls his new Province of Writing, the narrator declares the doctrine of verisimilitude as the only set of laws to which he is beholden. The unequivocal assertion of the doctrine of verisimilitude grants the narrator the license by which to contrive the events of the plot, a license to which he continually draws attention.

The narrator's claims of historical veracity together with his claims of probability and possibility act as a kind of antidote to the supernatural devices employed by writers in the Romance genre. The authority of historical factuality is in turn undermined by the narrator who actively disparages history on the grounds that it cannot

give the reader anything beyond empirical facts, which are represented in the narrative as misleading anyway. Although the narrator's rules to govern his new Province of Writing cleverly assert his right to write fiction, they work concordantly with his claims to historicity in keeping the depictions of characters and events as close as possible, mimetically, to the actual world. The messy reality of everyday facts is ultimately overcome or transcended by the good-natured characters, while the characters with a more malevolent turn remain unhappy and mired in the materiality of their existence.

By keeping the fictional world unswervingly representative of social misrule and disorder, Fielding makes his ultimate assertion of a divine order more acceptable to a reading audience increasingly focused on the phenomenal realm. The idea of a guiding Providence is not easily seen (either by the readers outside the narrative or the characters within) in Fielding's representation of reality. But the seemingly random occurrences that suffuse the narrative reveal in hindsight a carefully contrived plot wrought by an artistic and kindly-intentioned hand. At the level that Tom Jones represents only the profane world, the master contriver must then by default be the story's voluble narrator. The relationship between the narrator and his characters, however, analogizes the relationship between God and the eighteenth-century reader. Under the influence of the emerging empiricist ideology, God became conceived more as a non-interventionist power that constitutes the natural laws by which the universe is governed and less as an entity

who personally intruded into mankind's affairs.

In the narrative, only when Blifil's villainy is fortuitously revealed is God's hand unequivocally and unironically referred to (in Allworthy's exclamation: "the Lord disposeth all Things" (XVIII,vii,729)). The good-hearted characters are unable to see God's guiding hand until they reconstruct the fortuitous sequence of events that has led to Tom's redemption. Similarly, the reader cannot know the extent of the narrator's contrivances except with the benefit of hindsight. The characters, when immersed in the events of the narrative, and the reader, when immersed in the reading of the narrative, can only guess at the contrivances of God and/or the narrator. Of course the narrator never affirms Allworthy's contention that the guiding hand of God was responsible for the happy ending, preferring to chalk up the events to "fortune"; nor does he unequivocally affirm that the history and its happy ending are only fictions from his own imagination.

The factious convergence of historical and fictional discourses in Tom Jones marks a significant moment in the development of the novel. By undermining the claims in Tom Jones to historicity, Fielding dissociates his work from that of Defoe and Richardson, authors who went to great lengths to create the illusion of historical veracity for their texts. Whereas Defoe and Richardson produced fictions posing as history, Fielding's use of history is more complex. His later novels, especially Tom Jones, are works of fiction posing as fiction posing as history. Fielding undresses the history topos not only by exposing the

artistry implicit in all history, but by enacting and drawing attention to its use as a topos within a work of fiction. Fielding did not single-handedly liberate the creative writer from having to justify the truthfulness of his or her work. But after Fielding's effort to (re)establish the poet's right to invent history (within the strictures of verisimilitude), the need to entice--with the history topos--an ontological commitment from an empirically biased reader fades from the subsequent development of the novel genre.

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